The pride of North Carolina's electric cooperatives

Volume 37, No. 2, February 2005

Carolina country

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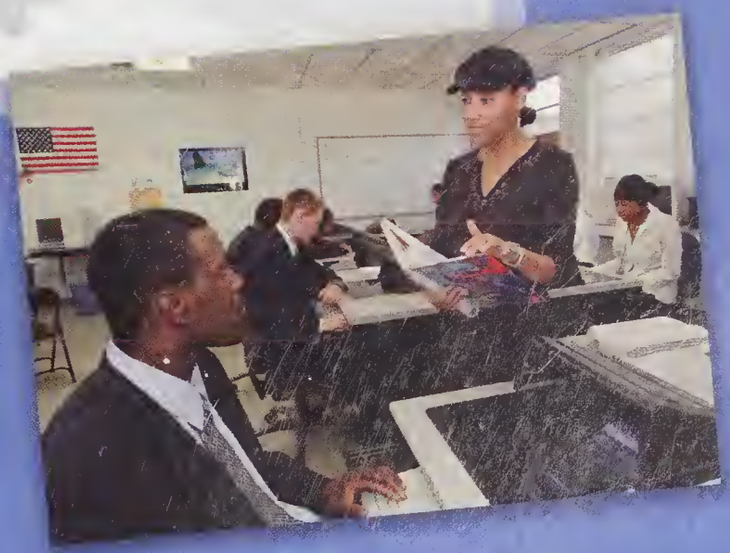

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th Carolina's electric cooperatives provide reliable, safe affordable electric service to 850,000 homes, farms and inesses in North Carolina. The 27 electric cooperatives each member-owned, not-for-profit and overseen by a rd of directors elected by the membership.

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YOUR ADDRESS CHANGED?

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It wasn't the big house and white picket fence we wanted, but it would do. See page 22

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SEE YOUR OLD PHOTOS in a new book

Help us publish "Carolina Country Reflections," a book that will celebrate the people and places of rural North Carolina the way we were.

Send us your photographs dated before 1970. They will be judged according to the qualifications listed below. We'll publish the selected pictures in a limited edition, high-quality hardcover "coffee table" book that will be available in Fall 2005.

There is no other book like this one! You can be part of it!

Judging Qualifications: Photos must show North Carolina people, places or events up to 1970: routine activities, chores, communities, sports, vacations, meals, work sites, church events, clubs, good times and bad, challenges and joys. Portraits or snapshots of families or individuals will not be selected unless they show something truly unusual. Photos must be reproduction quality (clear focus, no severe creases or stains). Black & white and color are both acceptable. Slides and negatives are OK. (No newspaper photos, please.) They must be free of restrictive license or copyright.

What to Send: Photograph only—do not send frames. Protect against bending. Digital images must be 300 dpi and must measure at least 5 by 7 inches at 300 dpi.

Include: Description of content (year if known, location, people's names, photographer's name if known). Your story about the picture. Your name, mailing address, phone number, e-mail address.

Terms: We will scan all photos as they are received and return originals immediately in safe mailers. Contributors of selected photographs will be notified in summer 2005. Contributors of selected photographs will receive one book at no charge. (One book per contributor.) Carolina Country retains reprint rights.

Deadline: All photos must be received by May 1, 2005.

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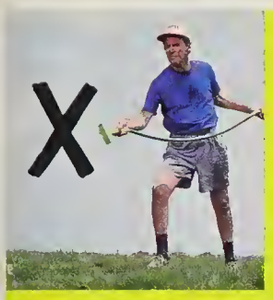

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Mow your zoysia lawn once a month – or less! It rewards you with weed-free beauty all summer long.

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5 IT STAYS GREEN IN SPITE OF HEAT AND DROUGHT

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Promoting rural electric cooperatives in other nations

By Bob Saint

I recently took the opportunity to volunteer two weeks of my time in Nepal for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association's International Foundation. I got so much more out of the experience than I gave.

After we left Washington, D.C., my wife, Ann, and I met our fellow volunteer and soon-to-be long-lasting friend, Patrick Muri, at the Los Angeles airport. Pat is from Flathead Electric Co-op in Kalispell, Mont., and is truly a "lineman without borders." Armed with a description of a potential project and great enthusiasm, we set out to find a place to build a power line to electrify a rural area in Nepal—a mountainous country of some 22 million people located between India and China—and teach the Nepalese people about rural electric cooperatives. When we arrived in the capital city of Katmandu on Monday morning, after being in the air over 30 hours and crossing the international dateline, our education was about to begin.

Thanks to the generous hospitality of Mahendra Shrestha and his extended family, we met with several U.S. and Nepalese government and non-government officials, toured potential project sites and had a very positive experience. Everywhere we went, people were friendly and supported our goal of electrifying rural areas in Nepal and forming co-ops to operate and maintain the systems. Only 11 percent of the Nepalese people have electricity. The government-owned electric utility officially supports the formation of community-owned and operated entities that would lease or own and operate the electric grids in rural areas.

We felt before we left, and feel even more strongly today, that the very successful U.S. rural electrification program of the 1930s and 40s should be used as a model for developing countries today. We also should use the U.S. experience to develop economic guidance and standardized co-op principles. We feel it is almost an obligation to share this successful format through NRECA's International Foundation programs with those who would benefit greatly from electricity.

Bob Saint

Nepalese women at work.

However, almost universally we were told that building power lines to electrify rural areas was not the total answer to meet the needs of this very poor country that lacks natural resources and adequate infrastructure. One of the problems in electrified areas is that the people can't afford to pay for the electricity, so there is much theft of electricity, or as they call it, illegal "hooking" onto the grid. So, in conjunction with providing electricity, we also must stimulate other ways to develop the economy by providing other uses for electricity such as motors for irrigation, sawmills, looms, medical facilities and schools.

We soon found out that nothing happens easily or quickly in Nepal. The government of the kingdom is not strong, and there are almost daily strikes or protests by terrorists, Maoists or other political parties, which disrupt many activities. Until the political situation is stabilized, dealing with the corruption and efficiencies of the existing system will be an uphill battle.

But that doesn't mean we should give up or stop trying to help. As the patriarch of Mahendra's family told us, providing electricity to improve the lives of the Nepalese people requires patience, persistence and communication. We will try to take his advice and not lose sight of our goal of helping the very deserving people of Nepal.

Bob Saint is a principal engineer in the Research and Technical Services Department of the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association. NRECA is the national service organization for more than 900 member cooperatives which serve some 35 million people in 47 states.

The bench that visited Lake Norman

Millard and I have lived on beautiful Lake Lookout for the past 10 years and have enjoyed swimming, boating and good fishing. When Hurricane Frances blew in with all the rain, we were one of many families who were flooded out. One of the things we lost was our park bench that was in the front yard next to the lake.

This bench was special because it was made for us by a dear friend in Virginia. He had made it from scratch and placed a small placard on the back: "Millard & Terry 2001." (Our little granddaughter called it "The Military Bench.")

Ten days after the flood, I received a call from my friend up the lake, and she said "So you lost your bench in the flood." I asked her how she knew this, and she replied, "There is a large ad in the Charlotte paper saying 'Millard & Terry 2001, I have found your bench! Rolfe Neill.'"

Our bench had traveled down Lake Lookout, over the dam, down the Catawba River and into Lake Norman. This is a good 10½ miles downstream.

Because Mr. Neill, a good Samaritan, cared enough to retrieve our bench from the lake and put an advertisement in the newspaper, we were able to bring our love bench back home.

As you can see, the only damage was one bent leg. This bench was built with strong hands, a loving heart and can really take a beating.

A great big THANK YOU to Rolfe Neill for being so thoughtful and turning our loss into a great story.

Terry Ash
Claremont

Petticoat ticklers

Do you know what a petticoat tickler is? It is a kind of grass that has a long stem about 6 or 7 inches and grows straight up with little seeds on them. When it dries, the wind blows it off and sends it rolling and flying everywhere in the fields in paths. Back in the 1800s and 1900s the ladies wore long petticoats and dresses. When they walked the paths, these parts of the grass would get in their petticoats and scratch them.

Zelma West Reavis
Harmony
EnergyUnited

At dusk in Lincolnton

My son Jonathan, who was 14 at the time, took this photo as the tail end of a tropical storm departed Lincolnton this past summer. This was at the crossroads of old 321 and NC-150. He was working on a school project on cloud formations and we ran around trying to catch the light on the clouds before it disappeared just at dusk. You all get to see a lot of nice sunrises and sunsets, I'm sure, but I thought his composition of the power lines was very intriguing.

Stephen Brooks
Lincolnton

Corrections

The phone number published in December's Carolina Country for Project Racing Home Greyhound Adoptions in Greensboro was incorrect. The correct number is (336) 674-5774. You also can visit: www.getagreyhound.com.

An incorrect e-mail address was published in January's "Country Store" for Carolyn Rawls Booth's cookbook, "Aunt Mag's Recipe Book." The correct e-mail address is info@winocapress.com.

Thanks to the Queen Bee

I am writing to you on behalf of all the volunteers and students of the Carteret Literacy Council. We want your readers to know how generous the Carteret-Craven Electric Cooperative Foundation is to our organization.

In 2002 the CLC board of directors voted to begin an annual Business Spelling Bee as a fundraiser and as a vehicle to raise awareness of illiteracy in the county. This is an adult competition with teams of spellers from area businesses. The CCEC Foundation stepped forward that first year with a $1,000 donation and became our Queen Bee sponsor. They have continued this support each year since then. On October 27 seven teams competed for the trophy. The champions were a team sponsored by five area bookstores.

The council provides free one-on-one assistance to any county residents who wish to improve their reading, writing or math skills. This is accomplished through the use of trained volunteer tutors. To contact us for these services or to volunteer as a tutor call us at (252) 808-2020.

Christine Walters, president
Carteret Literacy Council
Morehead City

The Carteret-Craven Electric Cooperative Foundation administers funds raised by the electric cooperative's Operation RoundUp program in which consumer-members voluntarily contribute by "rounding up" their monthly electric bill payment to the next highest dollar.

CONTACT US

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Co-ops set a new electricity demand record in December

North Carolina's Touchstone Energy cooperatives recorded a new peak power demand Dec. 20, 2004, at 8 a.m. when approximately 3,838 megawatts (MW) of electricity went through the electric cooperative distribution network. The previous record was 3,763 MW set in January 2003.

The cold snap that continued into Christmas weekend was the primary reason for the record electricity usage. Some electricity users found themselves without power the day after Christmas, when a band of snow showers, sleet and ice affected regions from the Sandhills through northeastern North Carolina. The outages occurred mainly in Cumberland, Hoke, Robeson and Scotland counties, much of the area served by Lumbee River Electric Membership Corporation (EMC), which is headquartered in Red Springs. Line crews worked through difficult conditions Dec. 26 and 27 to reduce outages from a high of 14,000. Walter White, spokesman for Lumbee River EMC, said ice-laden trees and limbs that fell on power lines were the primary cause of the outages.

Less than two weeks later temperatures rose into the 70s, which eased demand considerably.

Growth is another major reason for the high usage. Over the past 10 years, the cooperatives' annual energy growth rate has averaged approximately five percent per year. Cooperatives serve approximately 2.5 million electricity users in 93 of the state's 100 counties.

The North Carolina Electric Membership Corporation (NCEMC) is the primary source of energy for the state's cooperatives and acquires power through a variety of sources. NCEMC owns generation capacity at the Catawba Nuclear Station in York County, S.C. Additional power is acquired through wholesale purchases from generation sources, which include Progress Energy, American Electric Power, SCANA and the Southeastern Power Administration.

Joe Joplin takes the helm at Rutherford EMC

Joseph H. "Joe" Joplin of Ellenboro, Rutherford EMC's vice president of operations and assistant to the general manager, has been named interim manager of the cooperative. He replaces Gary A. Whitener who retired Jan. 6.

Joe Joplin

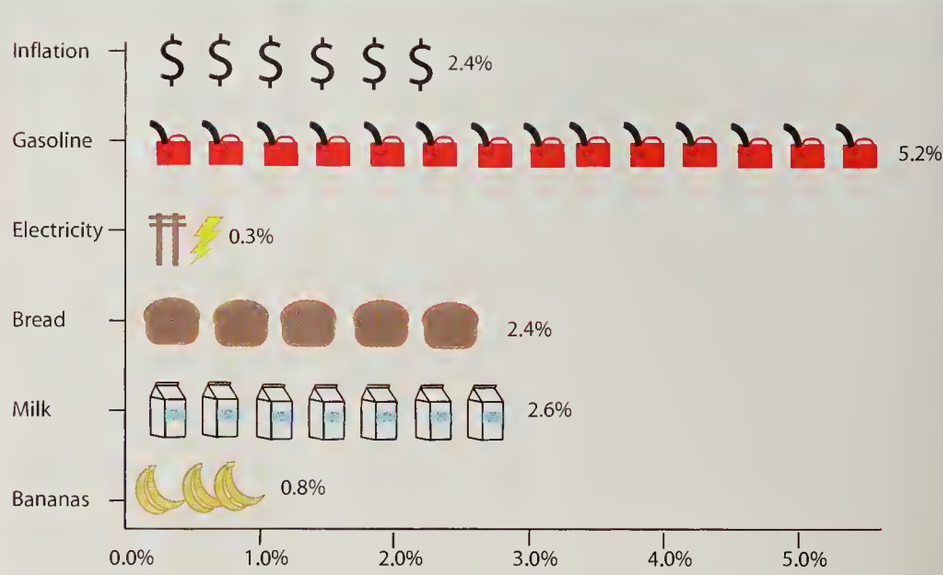
Joplin graduated from North Carolina State University in 1972 with a B.S. in electrical engineering. He began at Rutherford EMC in 1973 as an electrical engineer trainee and later electrical engineer. He became manager of operations in 1980, assistant to the general manager in 1988, and gained the vice president title in 1995.

He takes over the helm of a co-op that has a 10-county service area and more than 63,000 members. Joplin has already been involved in coordinating upgrades in the co-op's distribution and transmission lines, substations and office technology.

For many years, Joe Joplin set up the electrical service that powered the Ellenboro Colfax Free Fair. He served on the Ellenboro Volunteer Fire Department's Tax Commission and helped the department receive a higher rating based on newer equipment and updated training. He is board president of the Concord Community Water System and was instrumental in getting a water line installed to a number of his neighbors when many of their wells were very low or going dry in 2003. He enjoys his farm where he raises cattle and works with horses.

He is married to Alice S. Joplin, and they have two daughters, Carrie Short and Sarah Joplin; one son, Jake Joplin, and one grandson, Caleb Short. Carrie teaches math at Isothermal Community College in Spindale. Jake works as a staff engineer with Carteret-Craven Electric Cooperative, headquartered in Morehead City. Sarah is a freshman at NCSU.

The Value of Electricity



From 1994 to 2004, the average annual percent increase for the price of electricity has been only 0.3 percent. This is well below the rate of inflation for various common consumer items and also well below the rate of inflation itself.

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics; NRECA

High-speed Internet through electric power lines?

Electric cooperatives are studying the potential of carrying high-speed Internet signals over electric power lines, but it's too early to know whether the so-called BPL (broadband over power line) technology will work or be economically feasible.

A recent study for national electric cooperative organizations concluded that there are too many unknowns at this point, including whether other technologies may prove to be better suited for serving rural communities that cannot receive high-speed Internet service. The other technologies that can carry high-speed Internet or "broadband" signals include cable, satellites, fixed wireless and DSL (digital subscriber lines via telephone network).

The study was conducted jointly by the Cooperative Research Network (CRN) of the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association and the National Rural Telecommunications Cooperative (NRTC). It included looking at BPL technologies hypothetically installed in high-density electric cooperative service areas as well as very rural, low-density ones. "BPL has potential, but there are many hurdles to overcome before a true BPL marketplace can emerge," the report says. "Getting a handle on the real-world economics of BPL is challenging."

Some of the unknowns include how far the signal can be carried without interruption or interference and what effects temperature and weather events may have on the signal. CRN and NRTC plan to conduct trials in 2005 on co-op power lines.

In response to a recent Federal Communications Commission order intended to promote the BPL technology, the two national cooperative organizations said in a statement, "To date, no BPL system has been demonstrated to work, much less been commercially deployed, on a long, sparsely populated rural electric power line."

57 electric co-ops operate in Bangladesh

American electric cooperatives have helped developing nations establish consumer-owned electric distribution systems since 1962. Through the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the NRECA International Ltd. and the NRECA International Foundation have made considerable progress in Bangladesh, Bolivia, Caribbean nations, Dominican Republic, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, the Philippines and Uganda in particular.

The Bangladesh projects have been especially critical to that country. Bangladesh, located east of India, not long ago carried the reputation of a society struggling to feed itself, and more recently suffered an earthquake and tsunami (though not as severely as the recent devastation in South Asia). Progress here has been cited by the Bush Administration as exemplary for American assistance abroad.

Out of 70 co-ops envisioned to cover the entire Bangladesh country, 67 have been established and 57 of these are operational, according to NRECA International. About 20 million people in rural areas now have access to electricity through the 3 million meters that have been installed under the program. Electrification is proceeding at the rate of 390,000 new connections annually—averaging more than 1,000 per day. Total investment in the program now exceeds $1 billion with support from more than 15 donor agencies and countries, as well as $70 million from the Bangladesh government. USAID continues critically needed long-term support for NRECA technical assistance.

Among the U.S. co-ops that have participated in the Bangladesh project are Blue Ridge EMC, Piedmont EMC and Randolph EMC.

Thanks from Florida

Terrianna West of Lakeland, Fla. as well as a Florida school and members of nearby communities sent the following thank-you note to North Carolina's electric cooperative crews who helped restore power after hurricanes last summer.

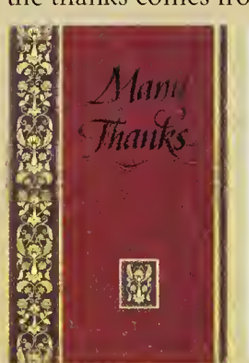
"To all of the North Carolina electric cooperative crews who took time out of their own lives to come down to Florida to help restore our electric services, we'd like to say thanks-a-million. During times of stress we want and need the help from others, but so many times we forget to say thank you, which is so very important because you never know when we might need the help again.

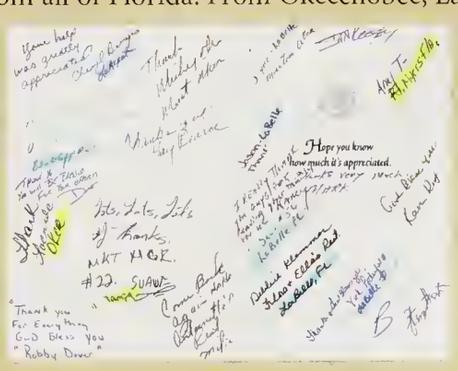
"We can't express our thanks enough for all the long hours—night and day—you guys were out in the water, cutting down trees, putting lines back up, etc.

"Your families must truly love y'all to let you come that far away from them for that amount of time. Some of you were down here for two or three months, even longer! You really are blessed to have families such as that. Even more so I'd have to say that down here we were blessed even more for good people like yourselves to help us out.

"The posters are from my girls and son. They decided to go to school and let the other kids at Lake Gibson High School say thanks in their own way and to let you know that even the kids are appreciative of all your hard work.

"The thank-you cards are from my customers and me to let you know that the thanks comes from all of Florida. From Okeechobee, Lakeport, Belle-Glades, LeBelle, Ft. Myers, Lakeland, Clewiston, Tampa, Moore Haven, Miami, Daytona, Ft. Mead, Bowling Green, Plant City, Winter Haven and other places."





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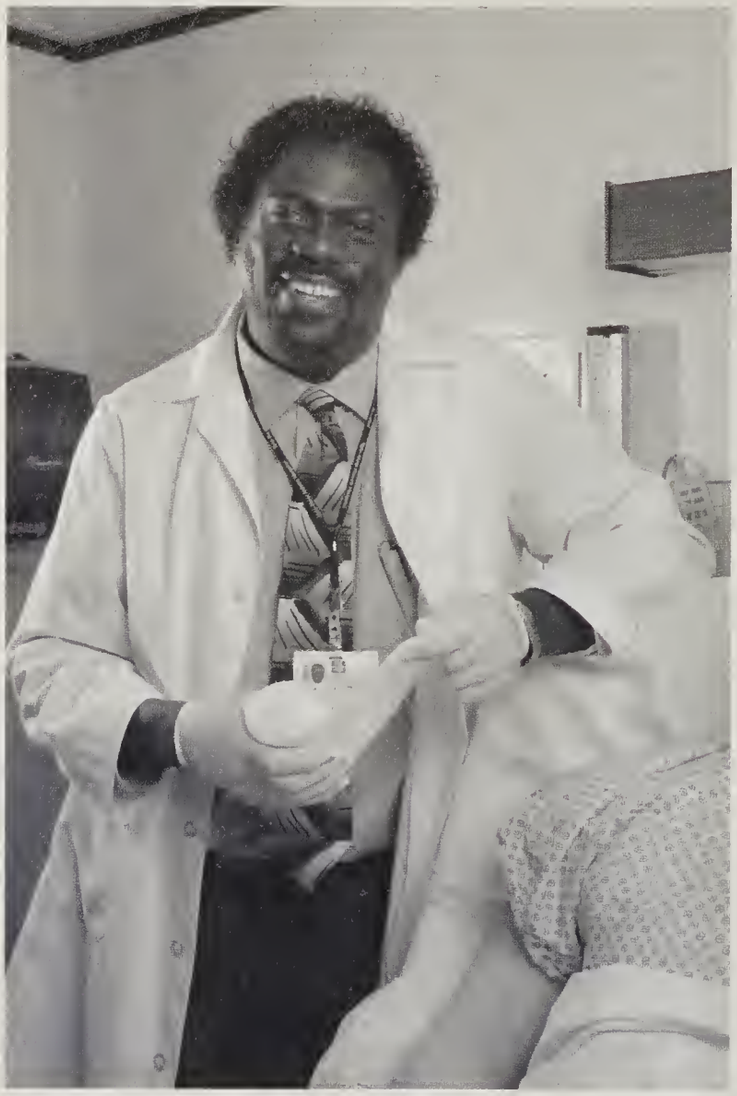

The Touchstone Energy Cooperatives of North Carolina hosted a golf tournament in November 2004 that raised over $73,000 for the North Carolina Jaycee Burn Center's "Learn Not to Burn" program. The program sends specialists (such as Outreach Clinician Ernest Grant, shown above) to make presentations to schools, fire departments, senior citizens, Jaycees and other community organizations. Many serious injuries and fatalities are prevented each year because children and adults learn not to burn.

Listed here are the major donors to the golf tournament. The cooperatives also are very grateful to the many other businesses and individuals who contributed to the success of the tournament.

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Students at Laurinburg Institute learn about the principles of water in Clause Marteny's science class.

Street Kids, Frogs and Basketball

As Laurinburg Institute marks its 100th year, the school looks to alumni for help

By Sidney Cruze
Photos by Don McKenzie

"The student issues are still the same, and our job is still the same: to give them lots of discipline and raise them to be cooperative citizens and assets to society."

Bishop McDuffie
Headmaster

A frog can cause a commotion at the Laurinburg Institute. If students at this private African-American boarding school catch a glimpse of one, they're likely to run after it, kicking up sand between the school's low brick buildings, so they can get a better look. Many of them have never seen a frog before.

Now, if you're thinking that high-school kids who don't recognize a frog can't be from around here, you're right. Most of the boys and girls who attend Laurinburg Institute grew up in cities such as New York, Cincinnati and San Diego. They come to Laurinburg to escape sirens, gunshots and gang life. Once they get to this small town, they must adjust to new noises: the buzz of cicadas, the hoot of a barred owl and the sound of silence.

"You've heard of asphalt jungles, well that's where many of these kids come from," Headmaster Frank "Bishop" McDuffie says. "At home they have to be tough to survive, but here they can be kids again. We offer them a haven, a place they can study and achieve their academic goals without the interruptions of city life."

Laurinburg Institute celebrated its 100th anniversary in September. It is the oldest private African-American boarding school in the country—one of only four such schools still in operation. The school's mission is to make it possible for African American kids to get a college education, and it boasts an impressive success rate. Since 1963, 83 percent of Laurinburg graduates have received a college degree.

"We're here to build people," McDuffie says, "and we're doing what we set out to do."

McDuffie is the link between the school's past and future. His grandfather founded the school in 1904 at the request of Booker T. Washington. A woman from Scotland County wrote Dr. Washington saying that African Americans in the state needed a school to educate their children. The president of the Tuskeegee Institute (now the University of Alabama) asked Emmanuel and Tinny McDuffie—just 18 and 17 respectively—to start one, and they couldn't refuse.

It was a brave undertaking. The young newlyweds walked from Alabama to North Carolina, traveling through Ku Klux Klan terri-

tory with no money and no place for refuge. But they were resourceful. They made it to their destination by relying on generous farmers and hitching rides on trains at night.

Upon arriving in Laurinburg, about 80 miles east of Charlotte, they faced the daunting task of building a school without land or money. Local sharecroppers donated funds for the land, and Confederate General Bill McLaurin sold them some swampland on the edge of town. Tinny cried when she saw it, but the land proved to be an asset for the McDuffies. Local African-American people helped them drain the marsh, which was filled with trees. Logs cut from these trees built the first classroom. The school opened with seven students on Sept. 15, 1904.

Those first students came to the institute to learn trades such as brick making and carpentry. Over the years, the curriculum shifted to reflect the times. Boys learned how to be auto mechanics, and girls studied home economics. The youth that attend Laurinburg today have different goals in mind: they want to go to college, and they want to play basketball.

Basketball prowess

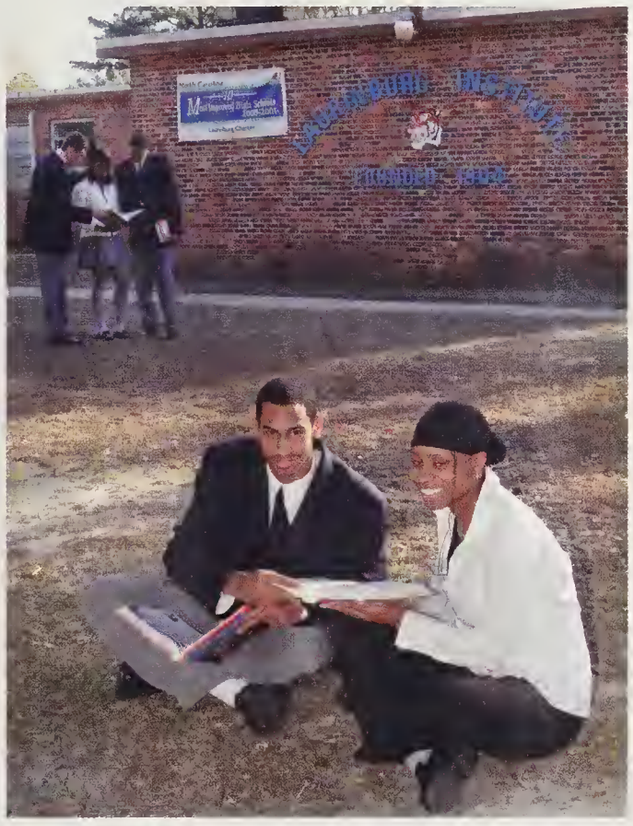
Laurinburg's basketball program is famous worldwide. NBA stars Sam Jones and Charlie Scott started their careers here. Bishop McDuffie reports it's not unusual for 30 college coaches to be scouting for talent at one Laurinburg practice. Last year alone, the institute graduated six McDonald's High School All-Americans. This award is given to students judged to be the best basketball players in the nation, and former recipients include Michael Jordan, Magic Johnson and Duke's Chris Duhon.

Although boys outnumber girls 10 to one at Laurinburg, the girls hold their own in athletics. Laurinburg track star Beverly McDonald competed in the Athens Olympics, and Kiana Robinson, also a McDonald's High-School All-American, was part of the University of Connecticut's 2004 NCAA championship basketball team.

Laurinburg basketball coaches have no problem motivating boys or girls to keep their grades up so they can play, but getting them to come together as a winning team takes some work. It's here, they say, that being located in the middle of nowhere is an advantage. The students don't have a lot of distractions, so they can focus.

Last year Coach Chris Chaney took his players camping as a team-building exercise. He gave them a tent, a pack of matches and told them to set up camp.

"It helped them build character, and it helped them become teammates," he says. "They played freeze tag, football and hide and seek. I just sat back and let them go. Imagine watching a bunch of 7-foot-tall kids running around the woods searching for butterflies."



Students Somali Malloy and Elvis Lora study before class.

Most boys and girls learn about Laurinburg through word of mouth. "We hear students and alumni tell kids, 'if you're trying to change your life and trying to go to college, you might need to go to Laurinburg,'" Bishop McDuffie says.

The annual tuition is $14,088, but few students are able to pay it in full, so they rely on private benefactors—many of whom are alumni—public grants and institute scholarships. Laurinburg now provides financial assistance to more than 85 percent of its students.

Discipline and morals

Basketball is the ticket to a higher education for many of these young men and women. Yet Bishop McDuffie and his wife, Cynthia, the institute's principal, know that it takes more than a strong jumpshot to make it though college. Faculty who are committed to seeing each student succeed form the backbone of Laurinburg's academic program, and a small student-teacher ratio guarantees that students get a lot of individual attention.

Times may have changed, but the values taught at Laurinburg have not. In addition to offering a regular high school curriculum for grades nine through 12, the institute promotes integrity—what Cynthia McDuffie calls "doing the right thing when no one is looking"—and Christian ideals.

Laurinburg is not church-affiliated, but every week, a group of students is asked to plan a program called Christian Endeavors for the rest of the school. "We ask them to discuss current issues, and they choose the topic," Cynthia says. "Self-esteem, the presidential election and what it means to be a friend are some that have been done."

Family lore says Emmanuel McDuffie wouldn't allow students to dip during school dances. His son Frank, who became headmaster in 1953, didn't let students slow dance. Now that Bishop is headmaster, the students can't touch at all during dances.

Discipline is a way of life at Laurinburg, and sometimes it's not easy. Students must be up at 6:30 every morning and attend chapel on Sundays and Wednesdays. They wear a uniform three days a week: a navy blazer and tie for boys, the same blazer with a skirt or pants for girls. They must sign out when they leave the campus and be back by 6 p.m. Many of the students aren't used to the structure, and they reject it.

"It takes time for them to trust us," Bishop McDuffie says. "But the more expectations we have, and the more we reinforce them, the more these students learn and excel. We've learned that people don't rise to low expectations."

The institute has been helping African-American students achieve their dreams for a century despite having to face struggles. Soon after the Supreme

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Court made the historic Brown v. Board of Education decision, the North Carolina Board of Education told Emmanuel's son Frank that the state planned to condemn the school because the buildings were old and dilapidated. A group of faculty and students were determined to keep it open, so they took the school apart brick-by brick and rebuilt it across the creek, where it still stands. Once rebuilt, the buildings were new, and could no longer be condemned.

Can Laurinburg survive?

That was in 1954. Today those brick buildings are showing their age. Every roof on the campus leaks, making dorms better homes for frogs than students, and at least one of the dorms is uninhabitable. Laurinburg is tuition driven, so fewer students means less money for teachers, computers and scholarships. The school can serve 125 students at full capacity, but current enrollment is about 60.

With only a small endowment to lean on, Bishop McDuffie needs to raise at least $100,000 to repair campus facilities, hire new teachers and realize a dream of his own, wiring the campus for Internet service. Spike Lee, Bill Cosby and Danny Glover have talked of making a movie to boost the institute's fundraising efforts, but it has yet to happen. So McDuffie is appealing to alumni for help. Laurinburg graduates include professional baseball star Wes Covington, former Prime Minister of Bermuda John Swann, and the late jazz great Dizzy Gillespie. McDuffie encourages former students—both well known and unknown alike—to support Laurinburg by reminding them of the role it played in shaping their lives.

The job isn't easy, but the headmaster is optimistic about the institute's future, and his enthusiasm inspires others to get involved. Jesse Callis, a former IBM engineer who is now president of Durham-based CCS General Contractors, is committing his company's resources to get the buildings repaired. He believes that once the facilities are in good shape, the institute will fill up with students.

"The need for what Laurinburg is doing is paramount," Callis says. "All kinds of kids need the type of mentoring they offer—it's something I got growing up. I see lots of potential here, so I'm doing what I can to help."

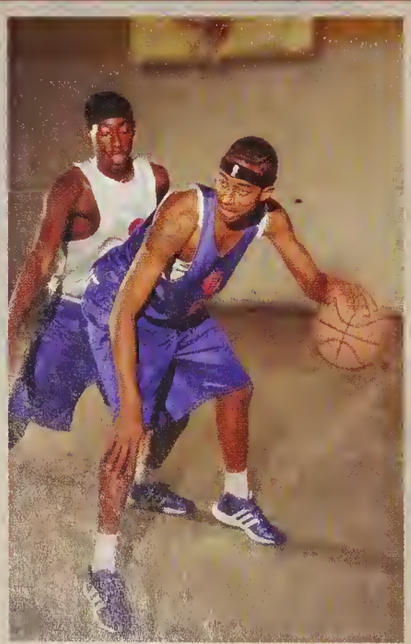
Bishop McDuffie believes the institute's most important work will continue, despite the facility's need for repair. "We've raised hundreds of kids, that's why we're here," he says. "We've been doing it for 100 years, and I hope we'll be doing it for 100 more."

Sidney Cruze of Durham is a regular contributor to Carolina Country.

For more information:
Laurinburg Institute
PO Box 1787
Laurinburg, NC 28352
(910) 276-0684
tiger1lnii@yahoo.com

The Laurinburg Institute Band circa 1934, including Dizzy Gillespie (second row first from left).

A national basketball powerhouse



Seniors Magnum Rolle and Robert Dozier post up in practice.

Laurinburg graduates have set records in academics, medicine, music and the arts, but the greatest moments for the students have come in the field of sports. And one of the greatest of those moments came when little Laurinburg won the last national high school basketball championship tournament held in Nashville in 1956. Although there has not been a national high school championship game since Laurinburg won it, the team still ranks among the best in the nation. Coach Chris Chaney won the prestigious national high school basketball title in 2003-04 based on the team's win-loss record of 42–2.

The ultimate benefit of the championship season will be education. Fourteen Laurinburg Preps had committed to scholarships at NCAA Division I colleges by early November 2004. (Two of them opted for North Carolina teams. Mitch Mullins is going to UNC-Charlotte and Gregory Grimes chose North Carolina A&T.) Four others had agreed to commit by the spring 2005 signing deadline, and an additional four were considering which college they would ultimately choose. This year's team, which includes 10 of the nation's top 100 high school players, consists of players from the boarding school and a separate team composed of students in the school's charter school for local residents. They have to walk several blocks to borrow a gym at a local school when they want to practice, and their home games are played at nearby Scotland Accelerated Academy gym. As they left school for the 2004 Christmas break, the team was 24–0, averaging 103 points per game. Three games earlier, Coach Cheney, at age 32, picked up his 400th career coaching win against only 79 losses.

—James R. Singleton

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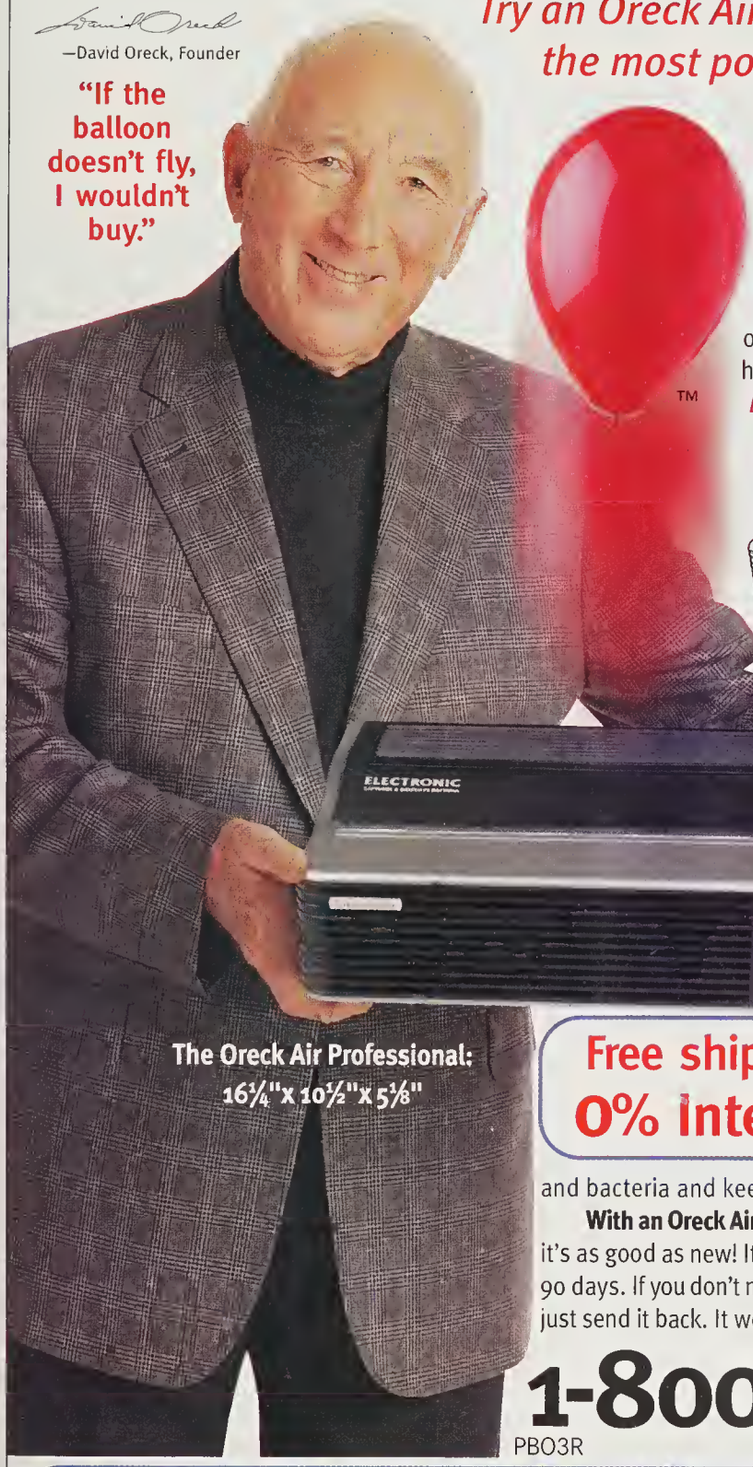

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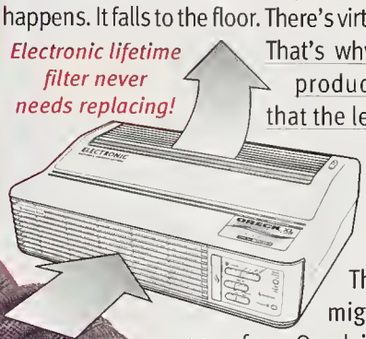

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Homes for Bluebirds

By Carla Burgess | Photos © by Mike Dunn

Since 1972, Jack Finch of Nash County has worked to revive eastern North Carolina as a welcome place for bluebirds

One afternoon last summer, Jack Finch climbed on his golf cart and prepared for a four-hour journey. He traveled only a mile and a half, but he made nearly six dozen stops along the way. Jack was making his weekly check of the 70 birdhouses he built and put up on his farm and blueberry nursery in Bailey, Nash County. The wooden boxes are homes for bluebirds, which Jack, who is 87, has been studying for more than 30 years.

"I think nothing but bluebirds 24 hours a day, eight days a week," he says. His obsession with the birds began in 1972 when he and his youngest son, Kelly, were digging blueberry plants and Jack heard the familiar sweet warble of an Eastern bluebird. He knew the sound from his childhood, but to his dismay his teenage son did not recognize it, because at that time the birds had all but disappeared from the countryside. They stopped work and built seven crude, wooden boxes with shingled roofs, then erected them immediately on poles around the farm. Eventually, bluebirds moved in.

In 1973 Jack founded Homes for Bluebirds, a nonprofit organization dedicated to restoring bluebird habitat, supporting research and educating the public. He believed that conservation was key to saving the species, whose populations had suffered largely because of widespread pesticide use, dwindling habitat and competition with aggressive non-native species.

Though bluebird numbers have rebounded, the birds are still in a fight. Unlike woodpeckers, which hollow out their own nest sites in trees, the bluebird's bill is not designed for chiseling. The bird must use existing cavities for raising young. Perhaps unaware of the consequences, people have destroyed habitat by removing dead trees, wooden fence posts and other places with holes and hollows where

bluebirds once built nests. The English sparrow (commonly called the house sparrow) and the European starling, introduced in the United States from Europe in the late 1880s, have stolen many of the remaining breeding locations. These species have handily outpaced the reproductive rates of bluebirds. Today, the house sparrow is one of the most abundant songbirds in North America.

Conservationists determined that the best hope for the bluebird's comeback was widespread placement of nest boxes—combined with strategies to discourage house sparrows and starlings. They also turned on its head the conventional wisdom of not interfering with birds and nests. To the contrary, experts insist that people monitor and maintain bluebirds' artificial homes and keep records on breeding trends. They even recommend evicting the aggressive starlings and house sparrows, which will take over a box and destroy bluebird eggs and their young.

Jack Finch perfected his own custom design and by 1979 had erected 2,280 of the vertical, rectangular bluebird boxes throughout North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia and Florida. He strived to monitor them at least once every 40 days. He put up hundreds of boxes in Pinehurst, Southern Pines and other places in North Carolina where golf courses are abundant. Though bluebirds will breed in a range of locales, they favor mowed, open landscapes where prey is highly visible. Bluebird boxes are now a common sight in pastures, on golf courses, and in rural and suburban yards.

About bluebirds

Bluebirds are members of the thrush family and a bit larger than sparrows, about 7 inches. Males are vivid blue with a rusty-red breast and white belly. Females are similarly colored but much duller. Young birds have a gray-and-white speckled breast with a tinge of blue in the wings and tail.

Bluebirds are often described as having a cheerful song and disposition. Adults and children alike are enchanted by bluebirds' stark beauty and docile nature. They spend hours watching them build their nests and peering into boxes to count the eggs and young. "Observing bluebirds is a good form of mental therapy, especially for older people," Jack says.

In the temperate season, bluebirds feed almost exclusively on insects. They hunt from high perches, scanning the ground for grasshoppers, grubs and other insects, then swooping down to snatch up their prey. Both the male and female feed their babies meals of primarily soft insects. In the winter, when insects are scarce, bluebirds eat berries. They particularly love the berries of hollies and dogwoods. Beautyberry, elderberry, mulberry and sumacs (staghorn or winged) are other suitable fruit-bearers that homeowners are encouraged to plant.

Bluebirds stay in North Carolina year-round and usually begin searching for nesting sites in late February or early March. So it's best to put up new boxes by early February

Bluebirds stay in North Carolina year-round and usually begin searching for nesting sites in late February or early March. So it's best to put up new boxes by January or early February. Days or weeks may pass before the male and female begin collecting grasses or pine straw to build a nest, usually in April. They typically build a nest in five or six days. The female begins laying eggs four or five days later. She lays one light blue (or rarely white) egg each day until the clutch is completed, then begins incubating them. The young hatch in about 17 to 18 days and spend another two weeks in the nest.

Bonded pairs can raise three broods each season—the first brood averages five young, the second brood four and the last one three, though Finch says as many as six may comprise a brood. The breeding season lasts until early September.

Because young birds fledge from the nests so quickly, it's a rare sight to see, even for Jack Finch. "In 30 years, I've never seen bluebirds leave on their own," he says, though on a few occasions he has accidentally flushed them from the box close to fledging time. For that reason, he recommends that people stop monitoring nests when the babies are 12 days old.

continued on pg. 18

Desma Perry has done her part in the chain of distribution. In 25 years working for Jack Finch, she's built 70,000 boxes.

continued from pg. 17

Devoted to bluebirds

Each year, Robeson County extension agent Everett Davis gets phone calls from people who want to know how to attract bluebirds. During the past 20 years, Davis has built about 600 boxes. He gives away the ones he makes from scrap wood and sells at cost the ones he makes from new materials. Davis also teaches 4-H and garden clubs how to build them. "It gets a whole lot of bluebird houses around the countryside," he says.

Desma Perry has done her part in the chain of distribution. In 25 years working for Jack Finch, she's built 70,000 boxes. Her record is 10,000 in a single year. That was 1990, when Jack and his accomplishments were featured on the "CBS Evening News" with Dan Rather. The saws and nail guns hardly stopped running to meet the demand for boxes afterward. Edith Finch (no relation), another loyal employee, once made 157 boxes in a day.

Jack won't even wager a guess at how many boxes Homes for Bluebirds has built and sold. All the money goes right back into making the boxes. Early on he borrowed thousands of dollars to buy a saw, which he has used to mill the lumber and cut all the pieces for the birdhouses. Now he's even growing the trees. "When I say we're nonprofit, I mean real, real nonprofit," he says. "I'd say the bluebirds owe me $12,000."

All these boxes amount to a boon for bluebirds everywhere. But Jack stresses that monitoring is just as important as putting up a box. His and other bluebird organizations say you shouldn't put up a bluebird box unless you will check it regularly.

"If you don't monitor and take care of problems you're actually doing more harm than good," Jack says. "You might just be raising sparrows to destroy someone else's bluebirds."

Plus, he adds, "You're missing half the fun if you don't check your boxes."

Carla Burgess of Raleigh is a regular contributor to Carolina Country.

Mike Dunn is an educator with the North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences and a freelance nature photographer. Contact him at mikedunn@aol.com.

BIRD AND BOX TIPS

Building and Mounting Boxes

A versatile and functional bluebird box has a fixed floor, three fixed walls, and a front wall that swivels at the top and latches at the bottom. Entrance holes should be no smaller than 1½ inches and no larger than 1 9/16 inches (to exclude starlings, which are larger than bluebirds). Perches are not recommended. Floor size should be either 4-by-4 inches or 5-by-5 inches. Boxes must have ventilation and drainage holes in each corner. Birdhouses may be mounted on wooden, metal or PVC poles. Baffles on the poles made of plastic or aluminum tubing will discourage predators like snakes and raccoons.

Place boxes at a height convenient for monitoring, usually 5 feet. Allow 100 feet between boxes, as bluebirds are territorial. Select a site near open or mowed areas, but not too open—bluebirds need a high perch nearby from which to spot prey. Boxes may be erected year-round. Put up new ones by mid-winter to recruit birds.

- For educational brochures or to order boxes, feeders, specialty hardware or handy cardboard nest cups, contact Homes for Bluebirds, P.O. Box 699, Bailey, N.C. 27807, www.danfinch.com/birds.htm or (252) 235-4664.
- The N.C. Bluebird Society has county coordinators who provide bluebird house plans, tips and reference material. To find the coordinator in your county, visit the society's Web site at www.ncbluebird.com. Or call Chuck Bliss at (336) 625-5423.
- The North American Bluebird Society also offers plans, fact sheets and other resources. Visit www.nabluebirdsociety.org or call (330) 359-5511.

Monitoring and Maintaining Boxes

The Birdhouse Network provides field worksheets and instructions for recording and submitting your data. Your input helps biologists expand the body of scientific information. See www.birds.cornell.edu/birdhouse or call (800) 843-BIRD. Observe and record nesting activity, including when egg-laying begins each season, what materials the birds use for building the nest, size of the clutches and survival rate of young. Remove any dead babies as soon as you see them but leave unhatched eggs alone. Clean out boxes between each brood, removing old nest material, blowfly larvae and other insects, and debris. Check for and fix any leaks.

Identifying Other Species

Bluebirds build neat, cup-shaped nests made of weed stems, grasses and sometimes pine straw. House sparrow nests are tall and messy, sometimes made of trash. Remove these nests, or better yet, locate your boxes away from places where house sparrows abound—such as close to your house or near a source of grain. Do not disturb nests of other native species that may use the box, such as tree swallows, flycatchers, wrens, chickadees and titmice. These are protected by law and are desirable species you can still have fun observing.

Feeding Bluebirds

Unlike typical feeder species, bluebirds must be coaxed to eat from a specialty feeder. Supplements like berries and mealworms can help birds survive harsh winters when starlings have stripped shrubs and trees of fruit. For training tips, consult any of the sources listed above.

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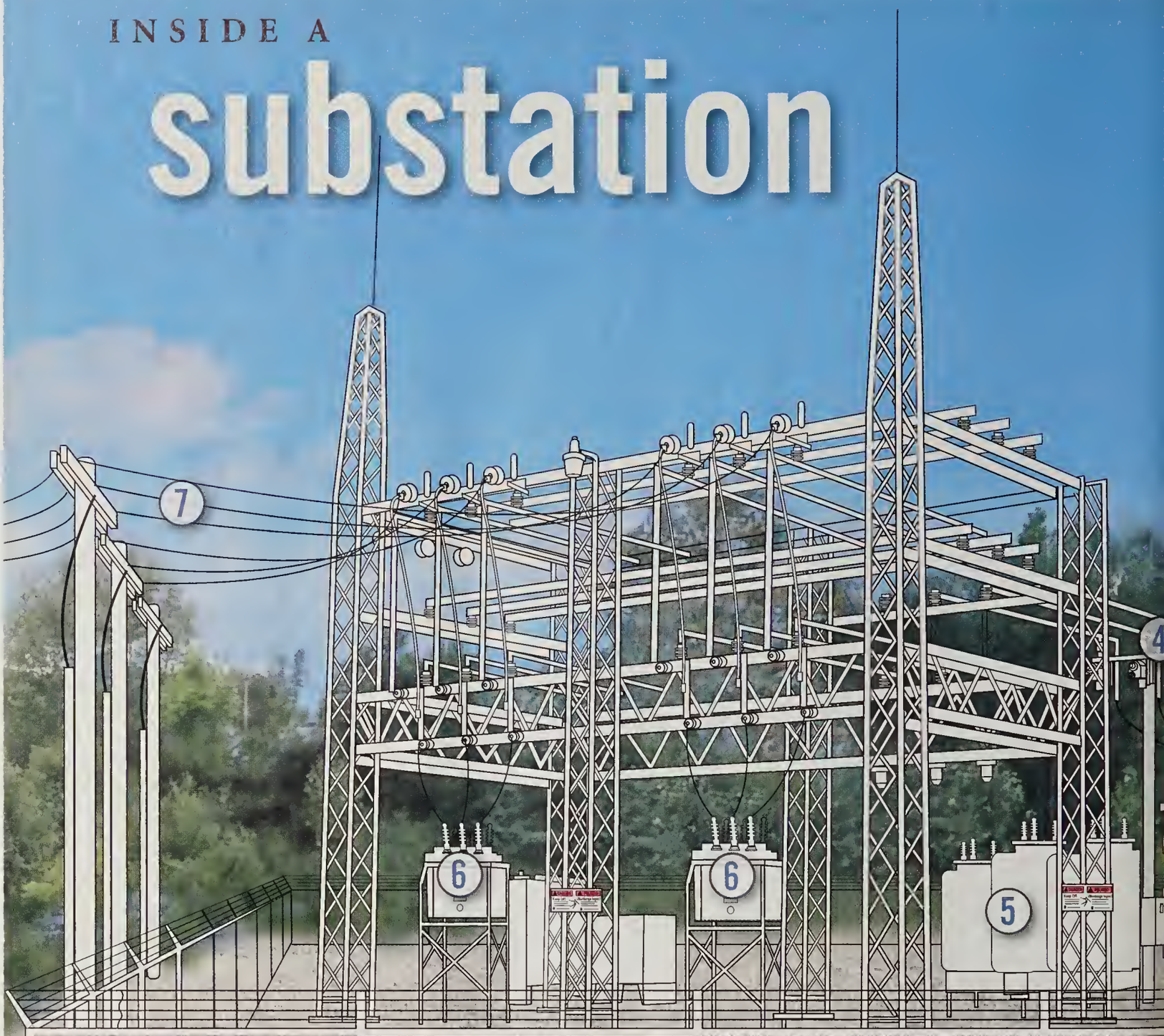
INSIDE A

substation



Substations contain equipment that controls the flow of electricity from a power supply to the end user. Cooperatives locate substations according to consumer demand; areas of high demand are likely to have a substation nearby. Cooperative specialists inspect substations at least every month. They also read the meters inside on a regular basis to determine how much power is passing through the substation.

Illustration for Carolina Country © Ed Vernon

1 Transmission Lines
Electric power enters the substation in 3 separate lines ("3-phase power"). The lines contain very high voltage (a measure of the current's pressure), ranging from 44,000 volts to 760,000 volts, depending on consumer demand in the area.

2 Circuit Switchers
Like the switches inside the wall panel circuit-breaker box in your house, these protect the substation's equipment. They can disconnect the circuit if necessary.

3 Power Transformer
Lowers voltage from transmission voltage to distribution voltage, typically down to 14,400 volts or 7,200 volts. Functions similarly to a transformer on the pole outside your house, which lowers voltage to be handled by your house's electrical system. Contains mineral oil and fans to cool the windings inside.

4 Potential Transformers
Measures how much electricity passes through the substation. This is how the co-op is billed for its power. Functions like the meter on your house. Measurement is read at box below.

5 Voltage Regulators
Controls voltage according to demand. They can step up the voltage, or step it down. They contain mineral oil to cool the coils inside.

6 Reclosers
If a fault occurs on the distribution line, reclosers open the circuit to protect the substation, similar to the circuit breaker in your home.

7 Distribution Lines
Power leaves the substation on 3-phase circuit to be distributed to consumers along the system.

8 Warning/Danger Signs
Warning signs posted on the gate and fence, and danger signs inside the substation, warn about high voltage. Signs are written in English and Spanish on most substations. Gate remains locked at all times. Security devices on gates notify the co-op if someone enters the yard.

FINALLY on my own

Remembering the first place you lived on your own

Thanks to everyone who sent us stories of that first place you lived on your own. We all remember it. Most likely we were teenagers without much experience at anything, especially paying rent and utilities or dealing with roommates and neighbors. Mine was a cement-block bunker in a trailer park at the beach. Another busboy and I shared the single room with our surfboards. If the outdoor light was on when one of us came home, we knew not to go inside.

—Michael E.C. Gery

1224 Denver St., Fort Worth

I was only 14 years old, my husband 19, when we moved out of my mother's house because I had become pregnant with my first child. We scouted Ft. Worth, Tex., for a house that was within our budget and finally found one (pictured above). It wasn't the big house and white picket fence we wanted, but it would do.

When the house was shown to us I had already picked out my room and imagined everything I wanted in it. It was a perfect two-bedroom, one bath, small living room and small kitchen house. What more could a 14-year-old ask for?

I still remember to this day the address: 1224 Denver St. A white and blue house filled with love and a new baby boy. I am now 21 years old and my husband 26. We have three beautiful children. We have lived in many houses and now we reside in the wonderful state of North Carolina.

Mariaelena Banuelos
Robbins, Randolph EMC

Where we were meant to be

Growing up, it was Ma-maw and Pa-Paw's house. At the end of a dirt road and built with my grandfather's hands, my grandparents' house was the first place my wife and I called home. After we were married in 1995, we moved in with a dog, a cat, a parakeet and hearts full of dreams. Our plan was to stay for about two years until we found a place of our own. Little did we know, we had already found it.

As we looked at other houses, we kept comparing them to the one that we came home to each evening. None seemed to measure up. No, the house wasn't exactly what we would have built, but we came to realize that this was where we were supposed to be.

As anyone who has lived in an older home can attest, remodeling and repair work seem to be constant. We worked in one room, then another, installed central air and finished a play room in the attic. During the removal of a wall three years ago, I found a framing member that my grandparents had written their initials on during the construction of the house: "WCR

GO ONLINE
www.carolinacountry.com

You can see more "Finally On My Own" stories on our Web site. Next month we'll publish your photos of strange-looking plants and produce. (Deadline was Jan. 15.) For the remaining themes in our "Nothing Could Be Finer" series, see page 24.

and LLR October 10, 1934." I boxed that out and left it as a sort of "cornerstone" for our now 70-year-old house.

We've been in the house going on nine years now and couldn't imagine living anywhere else. We've lost all of the animals that we arrived with but have added a son and a daughter, another cat and three dogs over that time. We've agreed that it must have been part of God's plan for us to look after this part of Davie County for the next several years. And knowing that we're walking in my grandparents' footsteps makes it all that much more special.

Jeff Beauchamp
Mocksville, EnergyUnited

The downtown neighborhood

In 1966, this naive 18-year-old Christian farm girl went to the big city of Columbus, Ohio, to attend business college. My part-time job was for a real estate investor who also rented apartments. They had a very old, seedy looking, brick apartment building located right downtown next to all the high-rise office towers. The city, county and state government buildings, including the county jail, were right across the alley. I could work from there and walk to college. The price was right: $75 per month furnished with all new furniture because they were my employer. So I rented this third-floor walk-up apartment.

The property manager at work told me stories about the other tenants, but I hardly believed the rumors. There were no characters like THAT in my farm community—ladies of the evening, derelicts, a male gay couple who had loud and violent fights. There was also a first-term state senator who rented the apartment for his "hotel" away from home. I was glad for his stable presence in our building and had made his friendship. He was my neighbor right across the hall.

The police came to my door one day to investigate a possible homicide of one of the gay men— they had disappeared and there was evidence of fighting and bloodshed. They told me also to be careful because there had been a county jail breakout that day.

Needless to say it was hard to fall asleep that evening, so I was in my bed reading late into the night. It was a hot summer night, so I had my window open and the radio playing to calm my nerves. All of a sudden a male figure appeared at my window standing on the fire escape, stopped at the window and started to speak—I let out the loudest blood-curdling scream that nearly knocked the senator off the fire escape. He was returning from a late session at the senate and thought he would just greet me.

We both lived to tell the story another day. I moved on to marriage and a nicer apartment in the suburbs, and the senator was elected president pro tem and majority leader of the Ohio senate for 43 years.

Kay Watkins
Matthews, EnergyUnited

From Hanes to the Sam Davis Hotel

I was raised on a farm, the 10th of 11 children. We didn't have a lot of money, so I worked my way through high school. I graduated on a Friday night in May 1956 and started to work at our local Hanes plant on Monday. I didn't have a ride to work from home, so my sister and brother-in-law rented me for $10 a month the tiny upstairs in a farmhouse where they lived. Now I could ride to work with my sister.

I was very careful with my money and was able to buy on credit a radio, a small record player, and a bedroom suite. You can imagine how proud I was of my little "apartment."

Later on a group of friends at work planned a trip to the Grand Old Opry, and for $20 I could go. That money bought our ticket to the Opry and my share of a room at the Sam Davis hotel. I decided to go without telling my parents. They would have worried. Only my sister knew. But hey, I was 17 and on my own!

Viola Shaw
Sparta, Blue Ridge EMC

10th Street, North Wilkesboro

After graduating from UNC, I landed my first job at Wilkes Community College, down the mountain from my home in Ashe County. At first I commuted, but I was eager to live on my own.

Friends at work led me to a local doctor who had carved out three apartments in a nice home that also served as his office practice in North Wilkesboro. I took one on the lower level: one bedroom, one bath, living room and small kitchen. At $285 per month including utilities and a short drive to work, it was just the ticket for me.

I had a wonderful year at Wilkes before other opportunities came calling, but what I remember about this apartment—with amusement and fondness—is that co-workers were quick to muse, "Whatever you say, don't tell anybody you live on 10th Street." (Allegedly, that's where "certain" women used to hang out.) Whenever I was sick, I'd go upstairs to see the doctor. And a blind date brought a pretty pot of daisies to my door on the eve of Easter.

Fourteen months later, the blind date and I married. A few years later, we were back on the mountain, and before long, we were blessed with a beautiful baby girl. Now, 20 years later, I delight in this momentary reflection.

Mrs. Bob (Karen) Powell
Fleetwood, Blue Ridge Electric

What was I thinking?

Sometimes the biggest mistakes in life can turn out to have the best outcome. Just six months after graduating from high school, I purchased a house with the man I thought I would spend the rest of my life with. What was I thinking?

After we moved in, the company (to remain nameless) that we bought the house from still had to come and fix various things that weren't as they should be. During the move, the tile in front of the fireplace had broken. The ceiling had been put together carelessly after the move. It took two months for the interior to be fixed and an outrageous nine months to grade my yard (which was perfect timing, because the weeds were almost taller than I was.)

As fate would have it, I ended up living by myself in the house after about two months. Well, it is two years later and it almost feels like a home. The yard still needs a lot of work, but it is something that I am very proud of. In just weeks, the house will be transferred to my name, and it will be my biggest accomplishment.

Sarah M. Smith
Snow Camp, Randolph EMC

First job, first house

My wife and I were married in 1954 and our first residence was an upstairs apartment in Murfreesboro. Teaching at Chowan College was the first job for both of us. The apartment was unfurnished and because we had no furniture nor the wherewithal to purchase any, we got our landlady, Mrs. Lee, to find us the bare essentials: a bed, chest of drawers, sofa and dining table and chairs from their storage and, as I recall, from a couple of neighbors, too. Appliances were not furnished either so we had to purchase a stove and refrigerator on credit. Our now-furnished apartment rented for $35 per month.

We weathered Hurricane Hazel that fall and when the chimney blew off the house during the storm, we headed for our friendly downstairs neighbor's apartment. We only lived there for one year because at the end of the school year I was drafted (Korean War).

Our makeshift apartment was not the finest place we have lived in our 50 years together, but we thought it was great and will never forget it.

Roger Warren
Raleigh, Blue Ridge Electric

Send us your best

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Here are the themes in our **"Nothing Could Be Finer"** series. Send us your stories and pictures about these themes. If yours is chosen for publication, we'll send you $50. You don't have to be the best writer. Just tell it from your heart.

April 2005
Road Trip Horror Stories
Where did you go and what happened? Send pictures.
Deadline: Feb. 15

May 2005
Safety Lessons
Accidents and mishaps that taught you a safety lesson.
Deadline: March 15

June 2005
On the Farm
The best things about growing up or living on a farm.
Deadline: April 15

July 2005
The First Meal I Ever Made
What was it and how did you like it?
Deadline: May 15

August 2005
What I Learned From My Kids
Sometimes children can teach grown-ups a thing or two.
Deadline: June 15

September 2005
Celebrity Look-alikes
Photos of people who are dead-ringers for someone famous. Digital ones must be 300 dpi and at least 4 by 6 inches.
Deadline: July 15

October 2005
My Favorite Photo
North Carolina people, places, things. Digital ones must be 300 dpi and at least 4 by 6 inches.
Deadline: August 15

November 2005
It's the Thought That Counts
The dumbest gift you ever received.
Deadline: Sept. 15

December 2005
Holiday Mishaps
Those holiday plans that just didn't work out as you hoped they would.
Deadline: Oct. 15

The Rules

1. Approximately 200 words or less.
2. Only one entry per household per month.
3. Photos are welcome. Digital photos must be 300 dpi and actual size.
4. E-mailed or typed, if possible. Otherwise, make it legible.
5. Include your name, electric co-op, mailing address and phone number.
6. If you want your entry returned, please include a self-addressed, stamped envelope. (We will not return others.)
7. We pay $50 for each submission published. We retain reprint rights.
8. We will post on our Web site more entries than we publish, but can't pay for those submissions. (Let us know if you don't agree to this.)
9. Send to: Nothing Finer, Carolina Country, 3400 Sumner Blvd., Raleigh, NC 27616
   Or by e-mail: carolina.country@ncemcs.com.
   Or through the Web: www.carolinacountry.com

Secrets to beating the high cost of college

By Tommy G. Lewis II, CLU ChFC

If you have a lifelong dream to give your son or daughter a college education, you've probably wondered, "How in the world am I going to pay for all this?" You have every right to be concerned. Recent figures show that the average cost of a four-year college education today can range between $40,000 and $120,000. Here are some insider tips to make the most of resources and help send your child to a good college:

Don't assume you are not eligible for grants

Ever wondered why some middle-class and upper-middle class parents pay almost nothing for their children's college education?

Most middle and upper-middle class parents automatically assume they won't be eligible for financial aid if they make over $60,000 per year and own a home. However, in most cases, these parents are eligible for some form of financial aid because the formulas also take into account other variables. Factors include how many family members will be attending college at the same time and the cost of colleges and universities being applied to.

Private school can be less expensive

Believe it or not, some private schools end up being less expensive than a state school or local community college. This is how it works: No matter what school your child applies to, you will have to pay your "Family Contribution," which is the minimum amount of money the government will expect you to pay "out of pocket" toward any school.

Let's say you apply to two schools: one private university and one state college. The private school costs $25,000 per year, while the state school costs $10,000 per year. Let's assume your family contribution is calculated to be $5,000, which is the minimum the government expects you to pay toward either school. But here's what happens: Because the private university is well endowed and has a lot of money to give away, they offer you financial aid that will cover all expenses above $5,000. All you pay "out of pocket" to send your child to a $25,000 a year school is $5,000. Unfortunately, the state school does not have that much money, and all they offer you is $2,000 in aid.

You end up paying your Family Contribution of $5,000 plus $3,000, for a total of $8,000 toward $10,000 a year tuition. It actually ends up being less expensive to send your child to a private school!

Consider college's financial aid package

Some schools are well endowed and can award a lot of money to students. Other schools have very little money to give away. By knowing in advance which schools award the best financial aid packages, you can apply to schools from which you have the best chance of receiving an attractive financial aid package.

Fill out forms done accurately and on time

Did you know that the majority of forms are submitted with errors or inconsistencies? Simple mistakes such as omitting a Social Security number or not registering a male student for the selective service can actually "bump" a form.

If this happens, you will have to reprocess your financial aid forms, which will take another four to six weeks. Since financial aid is awarded on a first come, first served basis, it is imperative that you get your forms in accurately and on time, or you will miss out on thousands of dollars in financial aid for which you would have been eligible.

Apply for all need-based sources

Leave no stone unturned when searching for money for college. This includes scholarships, grants and low-interest loans.

Be sure to apply for all "need-based" sources of funding through the federal government, the state you live in, and the colleges and universities your child is applying for, by filling out the Federal form (the FAFSA) and, in some cases, the Institutional Form (the Financial Aid Profile).

Get professional help

A good CPA can help you lower your tax liability, and a good college-funding specialist can help you receive more money. People are simply amazed when they find out how much money is available for students. Every dollar they can save you is one less dollar you'll have to come up with out of your own pocket. At a minimum, the consultant should help you:

- Arrange your income and assets to lower your out-of-pocket college costs.
- Select schools from which you will have the best chance of receiving an offer.
- Complete the major financial forms accurately and in a timely fashion.
- Obtain the best possible financial aid package from schools offering you money.

Tommy Lewis is a 15-year veteran of the financial services industry. He is a practicing financial consultant and owner of FIRST Financial Group in Raleigh.

Phone: (919) 876-4926

E-mail: tommy@ffgplanning.com

THE HICKORY miracle

In 1944, a heroic effort in Catawba County saved many victims of polio

By Don Haines

The beneficiaries of the Hickory Miracle could not have had a better place to be sick. The mortality rate at the Hickory hospital was just three percent, the lowest in the country.

It's been nearly half a century since the viral disease infantile paralysis, known as polio, killed and crippled many thousands of Americans, adults and children alike. The Salk and later the Sabin vaccines have eradicated the disease that had Americans living in fear every summer. Families who experienced the illness often found themselves ostracized by neighbors afraid of contracting the disease themselves.

But not all communities responded in fear. For instance, there is the story that came to be known as "the Hickory Miracle."

The dread disease came to the Catawba River Valley of North Carolina in May 1944. Most of the victims were children, and by the latter part of June, Charlotte Memorial Hospital was full and could take no more patients. Catawba County in particular faced a crisis, because about a third of its children were sick. There was only one thing to do: build a hospital. In just 54 hours that summer, Catawba County people erected and opened a fully functioning 55-bed hospital in Hickory and began taking patients. Soon, however, those beds filled, so new buildings were constructed and by September 1944 the hospital had 250 beds and was treating 400 victims.

The why of the Hickory Miracle is easy to explain: children's lives were at stake. The how involved the concentrated effort of many people and is a prime example of just what can be accomplished when the human spirit is functioning at full throttle.

"We need this hospital stat!"

On June 22, 1944, Dr. C.H. Crabtree, North Carolina representative of the National Foundation for Infantile Paralysis, journeyed to the small city of Hickory to meet with Catawba County's health officer Dr. H.C. Whims and the county's National Foundation representative Dr. Gaither Hahn. All three knew that speed was of the essence, that red tape must be cut. Whims suggested the use of a fresh-air camp for underprivileged children at nearby Lake Hickory. "There's one U-shaped building there now and we could pitch tents until other buildings can be constructed. It's not perfect but we're facing an epidemic here," he said. The other two physicians agreed and the responsibilities were divided up. Whims would be in charge of construction, Hahn in charge of supplies, while Crabtree would raise funds and obtain staff for the hospital. The Hickory Miracle was set in motion.

Shelby Duane at age 6 (left), two years after she was struck with polio in 1944, and a recent photo of her in Hickory. Eubert Sigmon posed with his cane and his mother in 1945 after his treatment at the "Hickory Miracle" hospital. Today he lives in Claremont. Author Don Haines took the recent photos. The others were loaned, including the photo on page 26 showing nurses at the temporary "Hickory Miracle" hospital.

Whims enlisted the help of two architects, a husband and wife team, Mr. and Mrs. Q.E. Herman, explaining that there was no time for meetings and blueprints, "We need this hospital stat!" (the medical term for immediately, from the Latin "statim."). The Hermans signed on. So did hundreds of others.

There was a war on and lumber was scarce, but the Hickory Miracle never lacked for supplies. Plumbers, electricians and carpenters donated their time, working around the clock, aided by hastily erected floodlights. The Hickory Fire Department installed hydrants and hoses. Male and female prison inmates dug ditches and worked as nurses aides.

It was still not known just how polio spread, but experts agreed that good sanitation and cleanliness were paramount in fighting the disease. Soon it was normal to see lawyers and bankers on their hands and knees scrubbing floors. Some stayed just to be near their children.

If Crabtree worried about where he would find medical staff for the rapidly expanding hospital, he needn't have. The Hickory story soon went national, and physicians and nurses from around the country descended on the town. When the hotels filled up, residents opened their homes.

The beneficiaries of the Hickory Miracle could not have had a better place to be sick. The mortality rate at the Hickory hospital was just three percent, the lowest in the country. Some were left with varying degrees of paralysis, while others regained normal use of their bodies, and many from both groups are still around to tell their stories.

"I was one of the lucky ones, because I got over it"

Eubert Sigmon, of Claremont, was 8 when polio struck him in July 1944. "We'd been stacking wheat in the barn, and I felt like I needed a break because it was so hot," he remembered. "I got on my bicycle to go get the mail and got real sick on my stomach. That night I began to get pains in my legs. My parents took me to the doctor the next morning. He said I might have polio but he wasn't sure, so he sent me back home. That night my legs became paralyzed, and the next day I was admitted to the polio hospital at Hickory."

One of the major controversies regarding the treatment of polio at the time was whether the hot pack treatments initiated by the famous Sister Elizabeth Kenny were of value. Some physicians insisted that keeping the muscles rigid was preferable to exercise and hot packs. The Kenny method eventually won out, but Sigmon was hospitalized for two months before the treatments were started.

"They took wool army blankets, cut them in strips, soaked them in hot water, then ran them through a washing machine ringer," Sigmon said. "Then they'd stack them about four thick and wrap them around your arms and legs. Those packs were really hot, and they stayed hot for a good while."

Sigmon says the worst part of his hospitalization came during the first two months when he was under quarantine and couldn't visit with his family. "But I was one of the lucky ones, because I got over it."

Eubert Sigmon goes on to say he could do anything he wanted to do until a couple of years ago when he began to suffer what may be the unkindest cut of all for polio survivors: PPS or "post-polio syndrome."

"My muscles began to deteriorate and pain me some," he said. "I went to a neurologist but he said there was nothing he could do." Sigmon gets around with a cane and has a scooter and a golf cart to travel around his property.

Shelby Duane of Hickory was only 4 when the polio virus hit. Like Eubert Sigmon, her symptoms started with an upset stomach. She was the 27th admission to the Hickory hospital. One arm, one leg, her spine, one side of her face and her diaphragm were affected. She said, "I still have a breathing problem, though I was never in an iron lung." (The iron lung was a machine that breathed for those who could not breathe.)

Like Eubert Sigmon, Shelby Duane thought she had won her battle with polio until she too contracted post-polio syndrome. "It comes from overuse of your good muscles, and aging plays a part," she said. "You feel the same pain, the same weaknesses, and sometimes new pain and new weaknesses. When I got out of the hospital, I wasn't using anything, not even braces. Now I'm in a wheelchair."

Undeterred, Shelby Duane continues to battle. She drives a specially-equipped van to her various support groups and is vice president of one. She has the support of her husband and her large family. She is representative of those who were given life through the heroic efforts of a dedicated group of people in 1944. Most of them have passed on, but if they could look into the eyes of Eubert Sigmon and Shelby Duane today, they would know that the Hickory Miracle still lives.

Don Haines is a retired registered nurse who lives in Maryland. His wife, Sheila, is from Yancey County.

Movies at the Beach, 1925. Local entertainment included watching movies on Wrightsville Beach at Lumina. (Courtesy of New Hanover County Library)

A CENTURY OF CHANGE IN THE

Lower Cape Fear Region

Armistice Day parade on Front Street, Nov. 11, 1918. A parade seen from building tops shows city streets crowded with electrical and telegraph wires. (Gift of Ida B. Kellam, 1982)

Mattress factory. During the Depression, some black women found work stuffing mattresses at a mattress factory on Nixon Street.

The Cape Fear Museum in Wilmington has expanded its long-term gallery and mounted a major exhibit that showcases the Lower Cape Fear region in the 20th century. "A Century of Change" is an interactive exhibit that displays objects and scenes to tell stories of the area's development over the 100-year period.

Visitors can experience a trolley ride in Wrightsville Beach, a movie at the Bijou for a dime, 1950s segregated classrooms, the growth and shifts to a more service-oriented economy, and the area's beaches, dancehalls, theater, sports and cultural traditions. Scenes recall the effects of World War II, Wilmington shipbuilding, the exodus of the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad, Hurricane Hazel, the closing of Williston High School, the opening of Interstate 40 and accompanying advances in communications, transportation and technology.

Cape Fear Museum is open 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., Tuesday through Saturday and 1 to 5 p.m., Sunday. From Memorial Day through Labor Day the museum is open seven days a week. Admission is $5 for adults, $4 for students with valid ID and senior citizens, $1 for children aged 3-17, free for children under age 3 and members of Cape Fear Museum Associates. The museum is located at 814 Market St. in downtown Wilmington. For more information, call (910) 341-4350 or visit www.capefearmuseum.com

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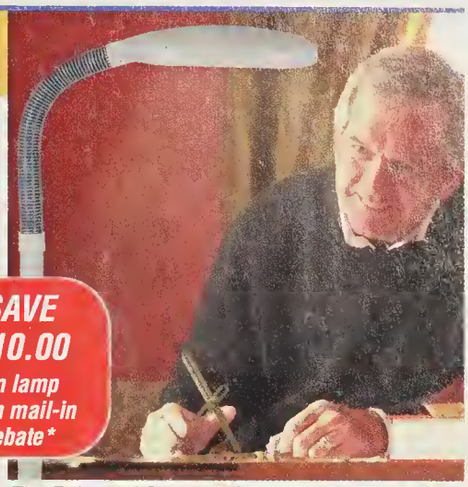

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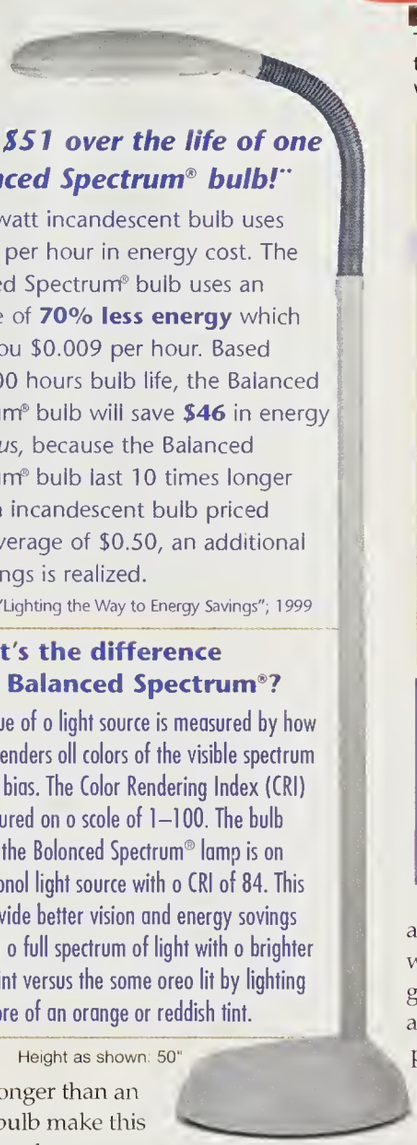
The Balanced Spectrum® floor lamp will change the way you see and feel about your living or work spaces. Studies show that sunshine can lift your mood and your energy levels. But as we all know the sun, unfortunately, does not always shine. So to bring the benefits of natural daylight indoors, use the floor lamp that simulates the full spectrum of daylight. You will see with more clarity and enjoyment as this lamp provides sharp visibility for close tasks and reduces eyestrain.

Its 27-watt compact bulb is the equivalent to a 150-watt ordinary light bulb. This makes it perfect for activities such as reading, writing, sewing, needlepoint, and especially for aging eyes.

We've looked at lots of lights, but this one offers the benefit of dual light levels of 27 and 18 watts of power equivalent to 150-and 100-watt incandescent bulbs. This lamp has a flexible gooseneck design for maximum efficiency, with an "Instant On" switch that is flicker-free. The high-tech electronics, user-friendly design, and bulb that lasts 10 times longer than an ordinary bulb make this lamp a must-have.


Height as shown: 50"

*SAVE $51 over the life of one Balanced Spectrum® bulb!***

A 150-watt incandescent bulb uses $0.013 per hour in energy cost. The Balanced Spectrum® bulb uses an average of **70% less energy** which saves you $0.009 per hour. Based on 5,000 hours bulb life, the Balanced Spectrum® bulb will save **$46** in energy cost. *Plus*, because the Balanced Spectrum® bulb last 10 times longer than an incandescent bulb priced at an average of $0.50, an additional **$5** savings is realized.

**Source: "Lighting the Way to Energy Savings"; 1999

What's the difference with Balanced Spectrum®?

The volue of o light source is measured by how well it renders oll colors of the visible spectrum without bias. The Color Rendering Index (CRI) is meosured on o scole of 1–100. The bulb used in the Bolonced Spectrum® lamp is on exceptionol light source with o CRI of 84. This will provide better vision and energy sovings through o full spectrum of light with o brighter bluish tint versus the some oreo lit by lighting with more of an orange or reddish tint.

Exclusive member bonus! Order your own Balanced Spectrum® floor lamp today and receive this exciting bonus gift pack including:

- $20 Coupon off your next purchase
- Free 6-month subscription to *first*STREET monthly product review magazine.

Try the Balanced Spectrum® floor lamp now at its lowest price of less than $50! Now more than ever is the time to add sunshine to *every* room in your home at this fantastic low price! The Balanced Spectrum® floor lamp comes with a 1-year manufacturer's limited warranty and *first*STREET's exclusive guarantee. Try this product for 90 days and return it for the product purchase price if not completely satisfied.

This light can change the way you live and work

As a commercial photographer, I probably give more attention to lighting than most people and therefore was impressed with the smooth, soft daylight quality of your lamp.

Dennis M.
Richmond, VA

I sit in my comfortable chair after my husband has gone to bed, and I turn that lamp on. It makes it so nice because it's like daylight over my chair...I don't get sore eyes like I used to.

Grace A.
Margate, FL

Results may vary.

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- *Shows true colors*

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38838

ROUND 9

YOU KNOW YOU'RE FROM

Carolina country if . . .

From C.S. Heafner, Lincoln County
- You have entered or seen a hollerin' contest.
- You make and eat straw pies (sweet potato).
- You have made or drunk corn cob wine and moonshine or know someone who has.
- For New Year's Day lunch you have hog jowls, field peas and cabbage.
- You know NOT to eat a 'simmon before frost.
- You have had a retired hunting dog as a pet.
- You have been scooterpootin' (messin' around away from home).

From Ryan Clapp, Kenansville
- Your dad tells you to mow the lawn and you sit on the tailgate of a Chevy holding a push mower while your older brother drives the truck around the yard.

From Joan Long, Harmony
- You remember meeting Fred Kirby at Tweetsie Railroad.
- You tell your company when they leave your house at night to "watch out for deer."
- You have kudzu growing in your backyard.
- You know who Chief Henry is.
- You know who wrote the song "Carolina Calling."
- You know whose band the Cracker Jacks was.
- You know what a hoecake is.

From Jane Owens, Francisco
- You've been told upon sneezing, "Skat tom, your tail's in the gravy!"
- You've gone down to the river to swim on a hot summer day, fish for small mouth and get baptized.
- You know that "high as a Georgia pine" describes someone who has had too much alcohol.
- You know who Brisco Darling is ("The Andy Griffith Show") and what it means to "put on your square wheels."
- Your first driving experience was driving a Cub tractor while sitting on your favorite uncle's lap at age 4.
- You know that primin' biccar is something you do for your neighbors when they are down sick and need help harvesting their tobacco crop.
- You were too little to go to the field or lay biccar on the tie-er (or stringer) so you had to pick up leaves or lay on the stick.
- You've spent the night under the shelter of a wood-curing tobacco barn to help your daddy keep the fire going. Maybe you ate roasting ears from the coals for supper.

From Lareen Beach, a teenager in Morganton
- Your Paw-Paw took you out on the riding lawn mower to make you stop crying.
- You know what a possum-hunting torch looks like and have used one.
- It's not "egg salad" but "deviled egg," and your friends picked on you for taking one of these sandwiches to school for lunch.
- You think an old coon hound is worth more than a registered fluffy lap dog.
- You're a 16-year-old girl and own your own duck dog and rabbit dog.
- One of your year-old cousin's first words was "four-wheeler."
- Your math teacher's son was called "Biscuit."
- You actually know who Biscuit and Big Country are (Morganton's Little League all-star first baseman and pitcher).
- You've watched cloggers at a 4th of July celebration.

From Mildred Willoughby, Greenville
- You remember sitting under a shade tree eating a moon pie and drinking Pepsi.
- Your Sunday dinner is collard greens, potato salad, fried chicken and barbecue.
- Men could dress up on the weekends in a white shirt and overalls.
- You known the word cruck means truck.

From Tammy Joseph, Fayetteville
- You know tearing up a tail has nothing to do with an animal.
- You know the difference between coleslaw and barbecue slaw.
- You have picked your own switch and then got a switchin' with it.
- You know all about sandspurs and licking your fingers before pulling one off your foot.
- You've picked catnip to make tea for a baby with colic.

From Lacey and Dolly in Gold Hill
- You scrubbed slime off your foot after stepping on a slug.
- As a child you ran barefoot into the middle of a sandspur patch and had to be carried out, and still wouldn't put on your shoes.
- Your grandmother wrapped your foot with buttermilk and bread to draw a splinter out.
- You dug crawdads out of the creek mud.
- You know what the bay of a donkey sounds like and enjoy hearing it.

From Bertha Seagraves, Laurinburg
- A textile plant was known as a cotton mill.
- You used a dooky book when you went to the company store.
- The kitchen was known as a stove room.
- People from the Great Depression had Hoover carts.
- You eat poke sallet and creecy green.
- You called biscuits "flour bread."
- You called a slip a "shimmy."
- You made whistles from squash leaf stems.
- You went to big meeting instead of revival.

From Victoria Dickerson, Murfreesboro
- On Sunday you cook black-eye peas and cornbread.
- You go downtown with hair rollers all over your head.
- Your aunt pulls the quart jar of pickles from under the bed.

From Latoria Lassiter, Woodland
- You walk in public with your bedroom shoes on.
- You leave church and the whole family goes to their mother's or grandmother's house after service.
- Every night someone is trying to play a spades game.
- You look out your window 24-7.
- Everybody who goes to the county jail knows each other.

From Kay Hobbs and a group of seniors who live at Mary Gran Nursing Center in Sampson County
- You've put lightnin' bugs in a jar.
- You've busted a watermelon in the tobacco patch and ate it with tobacco gummy hands.
- You never wasted any part of a watermelon, not even the rind.
- You have looped tobacco or poked it up.

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Fire Mountain retreat

Situated on hundreds of acres just outside Highlands, this secluded upscale hideaway offers beautiful surroundings, a tranquil atmosphere and views from 4,000 feet. (Deliberately, it does not offer televisions, radios, in-room phones, fax, Internet access or newspapers.) The 15 accommodations include cabins, treehouse rooms, and inn rooms with names like Cloud Climber and Red Thunder. Each opens onto an expansive deck or terrace. The hot breakfast, made with ingredients from Fire Mountain's organic gardens, is included with inn rooms. Lunch and dinner are available by advance order. In-room massage is also available at some accommodations, and small, approved pets are accepted in cabins. Mountain streams, waterfalls and hiking trails are nearby, along with a contemporary art gallery that rotates collections periodically. Accommodations start around $165.
Call (800) 775-4446 or visit www.firemt.com

Handmade crafts

Art meets skill at Double M Enterprises, LLL. This Winston-Salem based company specializes in attractive, handmade wood crafts and toys. Their one-of-a-kind products include weather stations, paper towel holders and tea candle holders. Specific toys include a grasshopper pull toy ($28) and wooden scooter ($114.95). Double M also offers classes in set design and makes theatrical scenery. Call (336) 724-2124 or visit www.mmenterprises.biz

Sweets for your Valentine

In the mood for something sweet and crunchy? Cookies By Design, with stores in Asheville, Wilmington, Charlotte and Raleigh, offers hand-decorated bouquets delivered to your door. With more than 300 individual cookie designs, the company can assist with gifts for clients, business associates, friends, relatives or "that special someone." Gift arrangements include themes for school, business, travel, sports and celebratory occasions such as anniversaries, birthdays and the arrival of a baby. Whimsical arrangements include cookies that look like the comic strip character Garfield, along with Disney characters Pooh and Mickey Mouse. The business category offers cookies shaped like dollar signs. Valentine's Day offerings start around $36. Call (888) 882-6654 or visit www.cookiesbydesign.com

School fundraising jewelry

Jewelry designer Kymberly Marley of Hudson offers custom-made jewelry tailored to a school's particular colors and mascots. Bracelets start at $1 for glow-in the-dark bracelets, and glass bead charm necklaces top out at $15. Her fundraising necklaces sport charms for basketball, cheerleading, soccer and football, along with hobby-related charms such as eight-ball billiards, and bookbag zipper pulls for bicycle and roller-blading charms. The Blue Ridge Electric member donates a percentage of her proceeds to the school she works with. Marley also creates glass bead jewelry through another business called Keep America Beadiful. Her designs are sized to fit princess to plus. Call (828) 728-0971 or visit http://schooljewels.mysite.wanadoo-members.co.uk.

The joy of soy

Green soybeans are nutritious and can be delicious, with plenty of protein, fiber, vitamins and minerals. Delight Foods' mission is to make these and other soybean products easy to consume. This Morrisville-based company distributes 100 percent vegetarian, low-fat soy food choices such as green soybeans, ready prepared soy meat substitutes, texture vegetable (soy) protein, and made-to-order soy products. The all-natural frozen food products are MSG-free, kosher, fully cooked and ready to serve. Delight Foods' Web site offers recipes for preparing such low-calorie dishes as green soybean pinenut spread, green soybean pesto and soy-stuffed peppers. Their products are sold at Whole Foods stores, Southern Seasons, and food co-ops across North Carolina. Call (919) 468-1077 or visit www.delightsoy.com

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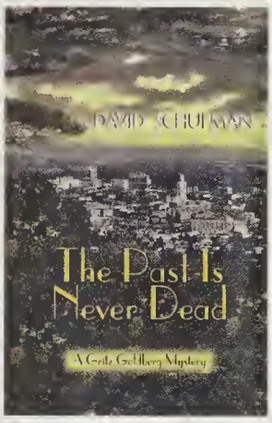
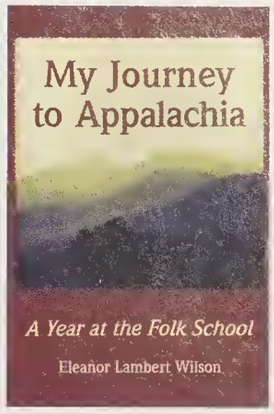
ON THE BOOKSHELF

"The Past Is Never Dead"



Mixing fact and fiction, this debut novel follows a single, middle-aged dad who has to solve a mystery. Set in Asheville, the reluctant amateur sleuth and psychiatrist uncovers a 60-year-old conspiracy involving assassination plots and war profiteering. Along the way, the quirky dad meets a corrupt senator and an attractive nurse, and gets set up to take the murder rap. Author David Schulman lives in Asheville and provides real-life parallels between the mountain city and his fictional Asheville. Published by John F. Blair, Publisher of Winston Salem. Hardcover, $22.95. Call (800) 222-9796 or visit www.blairpub.com

Her journey to Appalachia

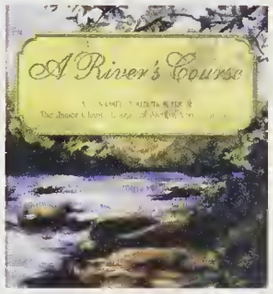


In 1941, city girl Ellie Lambert arrived in Brasstown to join the John C. Campbell Folk School staff. This native New Yorker hoped to see a different part of the world, and she was not disappointed. Her book, illustrated with period photographs and folk school collection portraits, recalls the tiny Appalachian community during that year. "My Journey To Appalachia: A Year at the Folk School" is published by Bright Mountain Books in Fairview. Softcover, $20. Call (800) 437-3959.

1840 McElroy House history

Historian and author Michael Hardy tells the story of this historic Yancey County home and museum through family stories, artifacts and records. The book covers the early origins of Yancey County and the diverse builders and owners of the Burnsville home. It includes photographs of the house, of museum exhibits, and of people crucial to the story of the house and county. Published by The Donning Company Publishers of Virginia Beach, Va. Softcover, $12 (includes shipping). To purchase, send a check for $12 made out to YHA to Yancey History Association, P.O. Box 1088, Burnsville, N.C. 28714. For more information about the book, call (828) 682-9712. For more information about Donning Company Publishers, visit www.donning.com

Gourmet cookbook

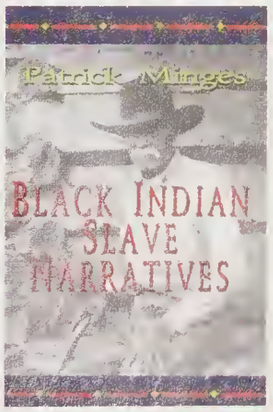


With more than 300 recipes, "A River's Course" offers a mix of recipes for casual dining on to elegant dinners. All recipes were contributed by members of the Junior Charity League of Shelby, and include selections such as pork with Carolina peaches, Tailgate slaw, Tar Heel pie, cucumber avocado bisque, butternut squash soup, and caper and olive bruschetta. Proceeds from the book go toward the group's projects. Hardcover, $19.95. Published by the JCL league and printed by Wimmer Cookbooks in Memphis. Call (704) 484-8281 or visit www.jclshelby.com

"When Mountains Move"

This debut novel explores how faith can move you beyond your current circumstances. A memoir by singer, songwriter and book editor Sandra Miller, it follows a young couple as they cope with a life-altering accident and the resulting quadriplegia. The Surry-Yadkin EMC member's firsthand narrative covers the fragility of life, the meaning of perseverance and the power of her religious faith. Published by Lovesake Publishing of East Bend. Softcover, $13.95. Call (336) 699-3757 or visit www.sandramillerministries.com

"Black Indian Slave Narratives"



Many people don't know that Native Americans were enslaved right alongside African Americans in this country, and that some Native Americans owned African-American and other Native American slaves. "Black Indian Slave Narratives" is part of the Real Voices, Real History series that collects oral histories of some of America's most difficult periods. Author and Murphy native Patrick Minges has culled firsthand testimonies about Native American and African-American relations. Interviews also offer historical details of capture and enslavement, life in the Old South, Indian removal and slavery in the Indian territory. Published by John F. Blair, Publisher of Winston Salem. Softcover, $10.95. Call (800) 222-9796 or visit www.blairpub.com

"Caution: Young Minds at Work"

ART BY ROBERT HALL

Rose Hill artist Robert Hall has issued a limited edition print of his oil painting "Caution: Young Minds at Work."

Hall has won more than 90 prizes for his work and has been represented by more than 15 galleries in North Carolina and South Carolina. He also has other prints available through his studio, including some in miniature at $8 each. The "Young Minds" picture shows his grandson Isaiah in the lower right. The Halls are members of Four County Electric Membership Corporation.

This print measures 16⅞ by 21⅛ inches. Each is signed and numbered by the artist. It is shipped flat. The print costs $60 plus $3.90 N.C. sales tax and $8 shipping (total $71.90).

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Getting To Know...

Name: Clarence E. "Big House" Gaines

Coach Gains and wife Clara

Born: In Paducah, Ky., in 1923.

Known for: Coaching. This North Carolina basketball legend racked up at least 828 wins while running his Winston-Salem State University team between 1946 and 1993. His effort landed him fifth on the all-time college win list, and he won the NCAA Division II championship in 1967. In his new autobiography "They Call Me Big House," the 6-foot, 5-inch coach recounts growing up in the segregated South, where black colleges were so strapped for cash that he and an opposing coach made recruiting trips together.

Accomplishments: Besides winning 12 conference championships, his teams drew white fans across the color line. Gaines believed his players' skill on the court helped integrate the towns they played in. "I came along at just the right time in history to witness and to lay a small part in the crossing over of black sports talent," Gaines writes.

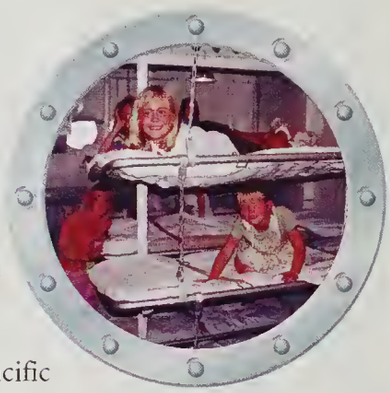
Quote: "I decided I would accept the head-coaching job and see how far it would take me."

What he learned: "Never judge a young person's ability based on the circumstance of their surroundings."

Do You Know...

Just outside Mount Airy in Surry County lies the largest open-faced granite quarry in the world? Shaped like a giant oyster shell, the quarry spans about 90 acres, and is currently under operation. An observation area is open to visitors. Many of Mount Airy's buildings are made from the smooth, gleaming granite, which happens to be North Carolina's officially designated state rock. For more information on granite and the quarry, call (800) 227-6242 or visit www.ncgranite.com

Field Trip Fun



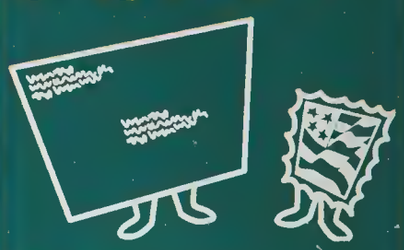
They may have no air conditioning aboard the USS North Carolina but at least they had a "geedunk stand." That's old-time slang for a soda fountain, and it's an example of what you can learn touring the authentically restored battleship. The USS North Carolina features nine decks, a sick bay, even a barbershop used by men who served aboard. The showboat battleship, which served in all 12 major Pacific campaigns during World War II, is located near downtown Wilmington. Visitors discover what military life was like in the 1940s and hear the showboat ship had hotel facilities, a movie theater, church, post office, ice cream shop and repair shop. Artifacts such as cartoons, letters, matchbook covers, rings, souvenir pillowcases and other mementos reveal the era. Resources for students and teachers include lesson plans, projects, and oral histories about sleeping, eating, haircuts, discipline and romance, USS-style. Reservations are required for class trips. The self-guided tours take about two hours. The battleship is open daily, including holidays. Call (910) 251-5797 or visit www.battleshipnc.com

SURF iT!

For more about the history of battleships, www.battleshipnc.com/history/battleships

For more about Mount Airy attractions, www.visitmayberry.com

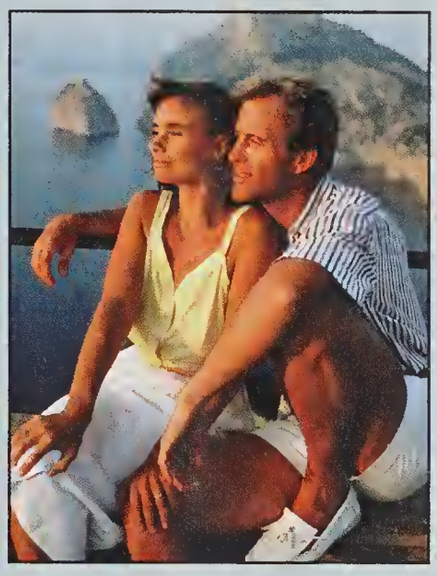
classroom chuckle



What did the stamp say to the envelope?

Stick with me and we'll go places!

If you have suggestions or comments about our bimonthly department, "Tar Heel Lessons," please e-mail carolina.country@ncemcs.com, write Carolina Country, P.O. Box 27306, Raleigh, NC 27611, or call (800) 662-8835, ext. 3036.



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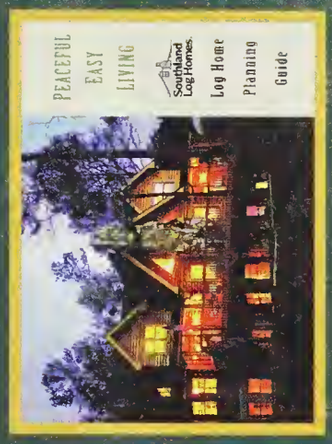

Personal computing advice by Reid Goldsborough

How to go online to save your files safely

I'm a compulsive saver. I save backup copies of all important computer documents I'm working on, and backups of my backups.

As I'm working, I frequently hit the Ctrl-S keys to save my current document to the hard disk. Somewhat less frequently, I periodically save a backup copy to a floppy disk, provided the file is small enough to fit on it, which it usually is. Somewhat less frequently, I periodically save a copy through the Internet to an offsite backup disk. And somewhat less frequently than this, I make a complete backup of all the documents on the hard drive of my primary work computer to a writable DVD disc.

I've never lost a document, despite making the not-so-uncommon but no-less-braindead mistakes of accidentally deleting an important file or destroying a current, nearly complete version of a file by overwriting it with a preliminary, incomplete version. I've also suffered one major data-destroying hard disk crash.

Another time I was a victim of a natural near-disaster. My wife and I were barbecuing out back when it started to rain, so we moved inside the back porch. I then heard thunder and nervously checked the computer in my office. I was working on a book and didn't want to lose anything. Everything checked out. Then...

BOOM! The bomb-like noise was accompanied by a small, momentary fireball on the ground maybe a 100 feet from where we were sitting. Lightning strike.

Even more nervously this time, I checked the computer again. Dead. An enormous surge of electricity had blown right past my surge protector and fried the PC. But my data was still alive, saved by a backup.

Fortunately, I've never been victim to the kinds of horrendous natural disasters that have been much in the news over recent months. Hurricanes can destroy not only your computer, but also any backup hard disks, optical discs, tapes, Zip disks, Jaz disks or floppies that you've dutifully made. This applies equally to tornadoes, fires, floods, earthquakes, volcanoes, landslides, avalanches, tidal waves and meteor strikes. Despite the improbabilities, catastrophes do happen.

All this underscores the importance of offsite storage. These days as a result of the Internet, saving important data offsite is easier than ever, with various options available.

One viable free option for home and small office users is to save documents to the Web space that your Internet service provider offers, depending on how much space it gives you.

You can transfer files using the same tools you would use to upload files when creating a Web site. You could use, for instance, a stand-alone FTP (File Transfer Protocol) program such as SmartFTP (www.smartftp.com) or the FTP tool built into another utility program such as VCOM PowerDesk Pro (www.v-com.com/product/PowerDesk_Pro_Home.html).

If you're going this route and backing up sensitive documents, you should encrypt the files to prevent Web surfers from, inadvertently or not, perusing them. One easy way is to password-protect these files using the popular Zip file compression format, built into many other utilities.

A more automated option is to use a specialized online backup service. A number of these services went out belly up during the dot-com bust, but IBackup.com (www.ibackup.com) is still alive and kicking. For $14.95 per month, you have four gigabytes to play with.

Along with providing tools you can use to schedule automatic backups of Pre-selected data, IBackup also lets you make its remote file server space look like another local hard disk, so you can manually drag and drop individual files to a safe, password-protected location. Unlike some other online backup services, you can use it to back up Mac and Linux files along with Windows files.

Xdrive (www.xdrive.com), which pioneered the concept of making remote file space look like local file space, is a similar service that also shows no signs of going away any time soon. Xdrive, which is available only for Windows, just upped its allocated space from 500 megabytes to five gigabytes per user, and it charges just $9.95 per month for the privilege. That's not enough to make a complete backup of most hard disks, but it's plenty for documents that most users create.

Like IBackup, Xdrive also provides other pricing options if you need additional storage for yourself or for multiple people. Along with using a service such as these for remote backups, you can also use it for sending files to others that are too large for e-mail.

For more basic backup tips, check out the Web site Backup Critic (www.backupcritic.com).

Reid Goldsborough is a syndicated columnist and author of the book "Straight Talk About the Information Superhighway." He can be reached at reidgold@netaxs.com or http://www.netaxs.com/~reidgold/column.

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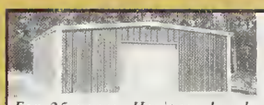

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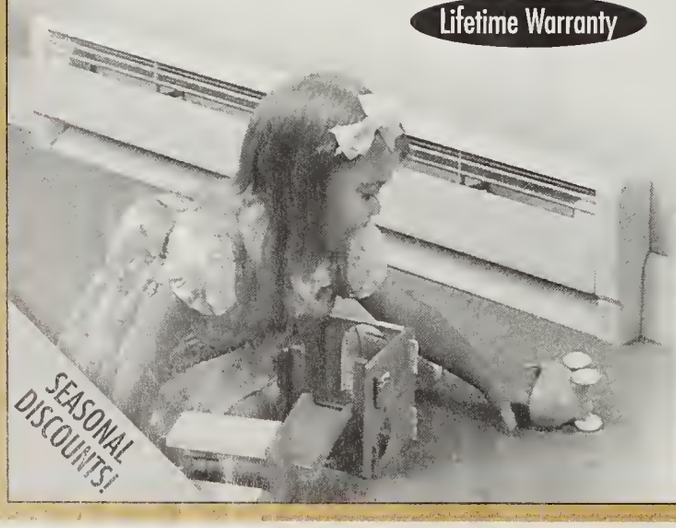

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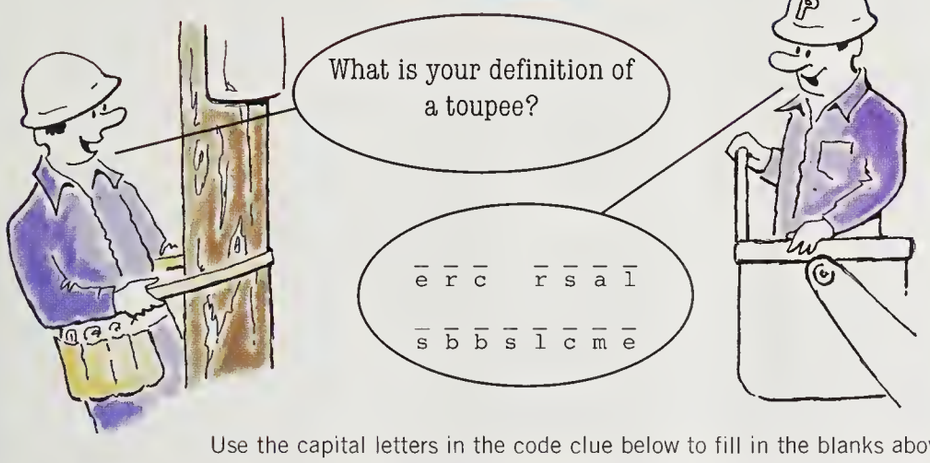

Use the capital letters in the code clue below to fill in the blanks above.
"A E H I N P R T" means
s c r a m b l e

Answers on page 43

MATCH BOXES

2	7	3	8	4	9	1	2	0	0	6	5	2
L	M	I	A	E	V	T	L	N	N	Y	B	L

X 2 L X 2 L X 2 L

									4
									E

Solve these three multiplication problems and write your answers in the box tops. You may want to use a calculator. Then match the boxes in your answers with the boxes in the problem to find three hidden words.

MATH a WIRDZ

Each letter stands for a digit in this division puzzle. Can you replace the digits?

```
          F E B R U A R Y
      ---------------
F   | T H E R A F Y H
    T
    -
      H
      Y
      -
      E E
      E U
      -----
        U R
        U R
        -----
            A
            F
            -
          U F
          U E
          -----
            U Y
            U R
            -----
              U H
              U H
              -----
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"They have agreed to take the cartridges along on the next hunting trip they take after I die, and fire a parting volley in my memory."

The funeral director did not share this story until after his employee had passed on to a happier hunting ground.

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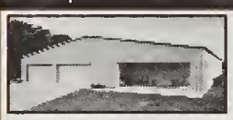

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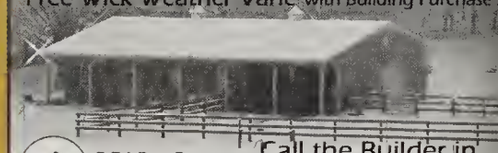

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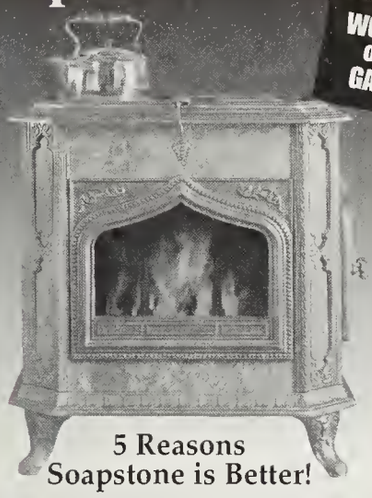

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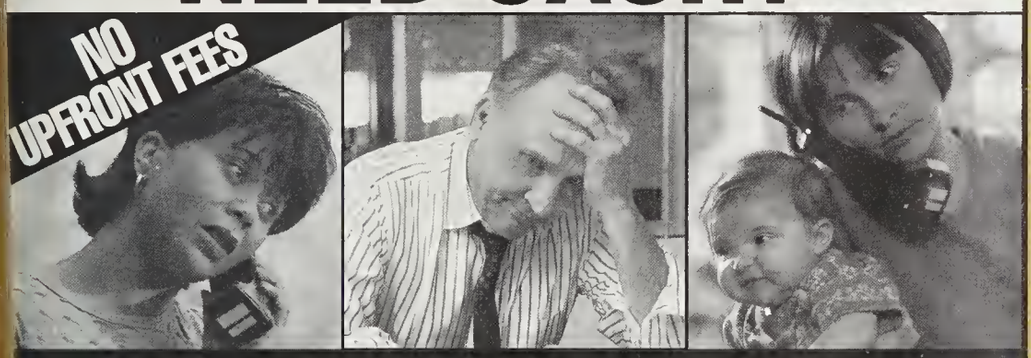

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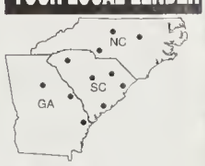

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(704) 866-6908
www.schielemuseum.org

Cooking School
Feb. 6–7, Pittsboro
(919) 542-4000

Fayetteville Symphony
Feb. 6, Fayetteville
(910) 433-4690
www.fayettevillesymphony.org

"Molly Sweeny"
Feb. 9–13, Fayetteville
(910) 678-7186
www.theartscouncil.com/gilbert

Conway & Korman: Together Again
Feb. 10, Fayetteville
(910) 438-4100
www.crowncoliseum.com

Nothin Fancy Bluegrass
Feb. 12, Oakboro
(704) 485-2112
www.oakboromusichall.com

Sha Na Na
Feb. 12, Fayetteville
(910) 323-1991
www.community-concerts.com

Stained Glass Class
Feb. 12–13, Danbury
(336) 593-8159

Voices Yet to Be Heard
Feb. 12, Huntersville
(704) 875-2312
www.lattaplantation.org

Astronomy Viewing Session
Feb. 15, Jordan Lake, Apex
(919) 362-0586

Hansel & Gretel
Feb. 15-18, Fayetteville
(910) 612-1571
www.uncfsu.edu

Folk Art Show
Feb. 19–20, Pittsboro
(919) 542-2121

An Evening with Todd Bridges
Feb. 19, Fayetteville
(910) 672-1571
www.uncfsu.edu

Southern Writers Symposium
Feb. 25–26, Fayetteville
(910) 630-7551
www.methodist.edu

Gaelic Storm
Feb. 25, Winston-Salem
(336) 721-1945
www.gaelicstorm.com

COAST

Leaded Glass Panels Workshop
Feb. 1, Edenton
(252) 482-8005

Hand Building with Clay
Feb. 2, Edenton
(252) 482-8005

Wildlife Arts Festival
NC Decoy Carving Championships
Feb. 4-6, Washington
(252) 946-2897
www.eastcarolinawildfowlguild.com

Carolina Chocolate Festival
Feb. 4–6, Morehead City
(252) 505-2203.

HOPE Clinic Cruise
Feb. 5, New Bern
(252) 249-1904

Valentine Party
Feb. 6, Beaufort
(252) 728-5225.

Winter Birds
Feb. 9, Beaufort
(252) 728-7317
www.ncmm-friends.org

Chinese Golden Dragon Acrobats
Feb. 11, Goldsboro
(919) 735-2074

Think Pink Art
Feb. 11, Edenton
(252) 482-8005

Sweethearts Weekend
Feb. 12–13, Hertford
(252) 426-1425
www.visitperquimans.com

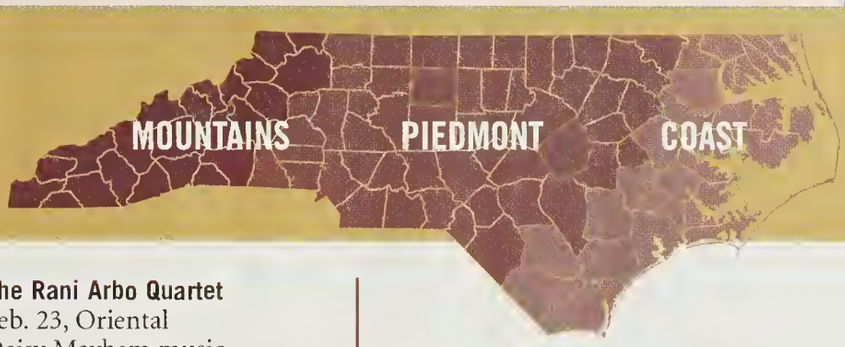
Silent Auction
Feb. 12–13, Hertford
(252) 426-3640
www.visitperquimans.com

Maura Bordes Cronin Public Artist
Feb. 12, Hertford
(252) 426-1425
www.visitperquimans.com

Tea & Crumpets
Feb. 12, Hertford
(252) 426-1425
www.visitperquimans.com

Oyster Feast
Feb. 12, Stumpy Point
(252) 473-5869

The Rani Arbo Quartet presents its original blend of harmonious percussion in a performance Wednesday, Feb. 23 in Oriental. Call (252) 249-3362 or visit www.pamlicomusic.org.



Ports & Pilots
Feb. 16, Morehead City
(252) 728-7317
www.ncmm-friends.org

Women's World Expo
Feb.18–20, Morehead City
(252) 247-3883.

Patsy Pond Trail
Feb. 23, Croatan National Forest
(252) 728-7317
www.ncmm-friends.org

The Rani Arbo Quartet
Feb. 23, Oriental
Daisy Mayhem music
(252) 249-3362
www.pamlicomusic.org

Beaufort Walk
Feb. 25, Beaufort
(252) 728-7317
www.ncmm-friends.org

Listing Information

Deadlines: for April: Feb 25 | for May: March 25

Submit Listings on Our Web Site Visit www.carolinacountry.com and click on "See NC" to add your event to both the magazine and our Web site.

Or Submit Listings by Mail, Fax or E-Mail Please include title, date(s), location, phone number and/or Web site url. Photos (300 dpi or hard copies) are welcome.

Send to: Carolina Compass, P.O. Box 27306, Raleigh, NC 27611
Fax: 919-878-3970 | e-mail: carolina.country@ncemcs.com

Now Showing

A new exhibit in Marion offers photographs by former McDowell County resident Jack Lawing, whose work has been recognized by Smithsonian magazine. The exhibit runs Feb. 1–28 at the McDowell Arts Council Association. Call (828) 652-8610.

MOUNTAINS

Jack Lawing Photography
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(828) 652-8610

Sallie Middleton Watercolor
Through March 15, Asheville
(828) 665-2492

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Kings Mountain
(704) 739-1019

Winter Crafter's Series
Through April 30,
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www.blowingrockvictorianinn.com/craft.html

1960-1980 Perspectives
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Asheville Art Museum
(828) 253-3227
www.ashevilleart.org

PIEDMONT

The Harry & Mary Dalton Art Collection
Jan. 29–Mar.20, Charlotte
Mint Museum of Art
(704) 337-2009
www.mintmuseum.org

North Carolina Pottery
Through Feb. 27, Charlotte
Mint Museum of Art
(704) 337-2000
www.mintmuseum.org

Magic Wings Butterfly House
Ongoing, Durham
Museum of Life and Science
(919) 220-5429
www.ncmls.org

Objects of Desire
Through Feb. 27, Raleigh
N.C. Museum of Art
(919) 715-5923
www.ncartmuseum.org

Catawba Indian Village
Ongoing, Gastonia
Schiele Museum
of Natural History
(704) 866-6908
www.schielemuseum.org

Four Season Photography
Through Feb. 27, Chapel Hill
Chapel Hill Museum
(919) 967-1400
www.chapelhillmuseum.org

African-American Quilts
Through March 25, Charlotte
The Charlotte
Museum of History
(704) 568-1174
www.charlottemuseum.org

Treasures Unearthed: NC's Spectacular Gems & Minerals
Through June 12, Raleigh
N.C. Museum of
Natural Sciences
(919) 733-7450
www.naturalsciences.org

Porcelain American Style
Through June 26, Charlotte
Mint Museum of Art
(704) 337-2000
www.mintmuseum.org

War on Terror
Through Dec. 2005, Fayetteville
Airborne & Special
Operations Museum
(866) 547-0649
www.asomf.org

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History of Flowerpots
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(336) 873-8430

Jim Lee Travel Photography
Through Feb. 24, Manteo
(252) 475-1506
www.roanokeisland.com

From The Attic
Through March 20, Beaufort
N.C. Maritime Museum
(252) 475-1500
www.ncmm-friends.org

Contemporary Quilts
Through May 15, Wilmington
Louise Wells Cameron
Art Museum
(910) 395-5999
www.cameronartmuseum.com

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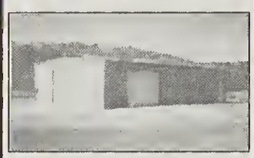

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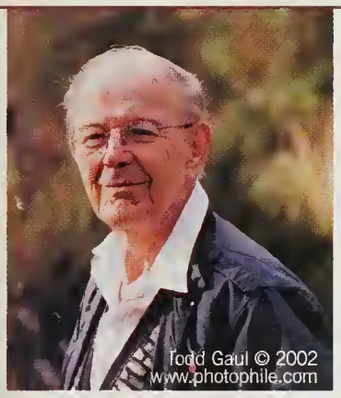

Proper pruning

February and early March are the best times to prune. Include laurel cherry, camellia, sasanqua, pittosporum, elaeagnus and glossy abelia. It's a bad idea to prune most hedges into formal shapes. Better to prune just enough to keep plants in bounds.

In general, vines require much less pruning than shrubs. But vines planted for specific purposes may need pruning quite regularly. Tie up or cut off wandering limbs to induce more growth in another area. Prune vines to allow more light into center of the growth and to remove dead, diseased and injured wood. It's best to prune flowering vines right after they have bloomed so you won't be removing flower buds later.

Charles Penninger wrote to advise us that winter pruning of muscadines actually results in more winter kill. He suggests pruning muscadines in the spring and letting them bleed. The bleeding will not hurt a thing.

Spring-flowering shrubs need special treatment—very little pruning, except thinning. Prune severely this year and you will probably see less blooms next year. If you must prune, do it early—right after blooms appear.

To produce well-shaped plants, young Camellia japonicas may need some pruning before they begin flowering. Older plants are pruned to remove dead or diseased branches and to limit plant size, especially those in foundation plantings. Prune plants after they have blossomed but before new growth begins. You can prune when you cut blossoms for indoor use in floral designs. Since flower buds are set on new growth during the summer, you won't lose any blooms from pruning. Remove individual branches at a point within the plant—never shear a camellia.

Pruning cuts longer than ¼-inch in diameter should be covered with a good wound dressing to prevent disease entrance. You may want to thin branches on a plant with dense growth. Heavily shaded limbs produce very few flowers, and they harbor scale and other insects. Thinning makes insect control easier and also opens the plant up, exposing more leaves to light, and producing a healthier plant.

Azalea trails and festivals abound in the South.

Azaleas across the South

These pink, red, white, yellow and purple blossoms herald spring with a special brilliance. The peak blooming time for azaleas in the South extends from February to May and June for Texas and the Gulf Coast; and April to June in Virginia and North Carolina. Many towns hold azalea festivals to welcome the masses of color. With some planning, you can visit azalea trails or a festival or formal gardens within hours of your home. Even your neighbor's garden or your own yard can reveal a colorful display.

Florida's climate means a longer blooming season for colorful plants. Spanish explorer Ponce de Leon called Florida "Land of Flowers," and the description still fits today. Florida gardens are filled with azalea beauty from as early as January through March. Cypress Gardens in Winter Haven has an outstanding display. This garden is known as "America's Tropical Wonderland." Here azaleas grow amidst rare and exotic plants from throughout the world. Gardens are open year-round.

Ravine Gardens in Palatka, about 50 miles south of Jacksonville, is an 80-acre natural garden. Azaleas bloom there from January through March in a rustic setting along a natural ravine. An azalea festival, similar to Wilmington's festival, is held annually.

Ponce de Leon Springs is eight miles north of Deland. This beautiful 54-acre park features azaleas and other shrubs and trees. Many species of birds, including peacocks, roam the grounds.

The River Oaks Garden Club of Houston and the city of Tyler, Tex., annually hold azalea trails. The Big Ticket, a lush wooded region of east Texas, is known for its profusion of wild azaleas. People who own wooded areas often transplant wild azaleas to their gardens and neighborhood roadsides.

Natchez, Miss., and New Orleans each boast restored gardens featuring azaleas at antebellum homes. The outstanding sites for azaleas blooming in Louisiana include Afton Villa Gardens north of St. Francisville, Hodges Gardens near Many, and the campus of Centenary College in Shreveport.

Editor's Note:

Our longtime gardening columnist Henry J. "Hank" Smith was injured in a fall at his retirement village in December. He has advised us that he cannot continue to write for the magazine. He submitted this column for February's magazine shortly before he fell. Next month, we will publish a special year-round gardening guide comprising a broad selection of his advice. Hank has written his Carolina Country column each month since August 1983. This is the 252nd edition of "Hank's Gardening Guide." We miss him very much. Hank Smith can be reached at:

Henry J. Smith
c/o Sally Coppedge
105 Warley Circle
Cary, NC 27513

GO ONLINE
www.carolinacountry.com

For more February gardening advice, go to the "Carolina Gardens" section of www.carolinacountry.com

"Smart" thermostats now easier to program

By James Dulley

Setting your thermostat lower at night during winter and higher during summer will save a tremendous amount on your utility bills. It is a common misconception that it takes more energy to reheat or cool your house after a temperature setback or setup. Whenever your house temperature is closer to the outdoor temperature, less heat is lost or gained. This means your furnace or air conditioner has to run less overall and you save money.

By installing a "smart" thermostat, you can go to bed and wake up to a comfortable house and never know the thermostat changed itself overnight while you slept. The change in the indoor temperature overnight is very gradual, particularly in an energy efficient house, so your body does not sense the changing temperature.

Most new smart thermostats from your heating contractor or from a home center store allow you to set different temperatures during four periods throughout the day and night. You can set the time periods to your family's schedule. Just as it saves energy at night when the thermostat is set lower, it saves additional energy to have the thermostat set lower while you are gone at work or at school.

A weekday winter schedule for the typical family might be 70 degrees from 6:00 to 8:00 am. When everyone leaves for school or work, it is set back to 58 degrees. When the kids get home at 3:00, it is already back up to 68 degrees. At 11:00, when everyone goes to bed, it starts dropping to 60 degrees overnight.

Write for (instantly download—www.dulley.com) Utility Bills Update No. 425—buyer's guide of the 11 smart thermostat manufacturers (25 models) listing temperature/time schedules, programming options, comfort/convenience features, and a savings chart. Please include $3.00 and a business-size SASE.

Send to:

James Dulley
Carolina Country
6906 Royalgreen Dr.
Cincinnati, OH 45244

Smart thermostats have followed the lead of other electronic items, and are now smarter and easier to program and use. Some sense both the indoor and outdoor temperatures and the indoor and outdoor humidity levels. This data, along with memory of how long it took to warm up the house on previous mornings, allows the thermostat to determine the precise time to start the furnace to meet your schedule. Your bedrooms will be warm when your alarm goes off in the morning, no matter how cold it is outdoors.

Smart thermostats are available with several simple programming methods that even the digitally challenged person can handle. For additional convenience, some smart thermostats have internal power storage so you can snap it off the wall base and program it in your easy chair. They include a generic preprogrammed time/temperature schedule so you can use them immediately and program your personal schedule at a later time.

Variety of models allow for humidity control and do-it-yourself installation.

If this still sounds too challenging, select one of the new smart thermostat designs that resemble a tiny touch screen computer display on the wall. The entire programming process is menu driven by touching its screen, so there is no complicated owner's manual or multiuse buttons to contend with. It is backlit to make it easy to see and to make changes in the dark.

When shopping for a smart thermostat, you will see a designation of 7, 5+2 or 5+1+1 on the packaging. These designations refer to the programming flexibility of the thermostat. A 7-day thermostat allows you to program a different temperature schedule for every day of the week. These are ideal if your at-home schedule varies.

With the prices more reasonable now, this type is generally your best choice for future flexibility. A 5+2-day thermostat allows you to program one schedule for every weekday and another schedule for the weekend. A 5+1+1-day model is the same except you can set different Saturday and Sunday schedules. For many families, these are adequate and require less programming time than having to program each day.

You can find these smart thermostats at most home center and hardware stores. Most thermostat wiring is safe low-voltage and color-coded, so the wiring instructions should be easy to follow for do-it-yourself installation. A heat pump thermostat has several more color-coded wires to attach. These are for the reversing valve (switching between heating and cooling) and the backup/emergency heating (often electric resistance heat).

If you have a newer heat pump with a variable-speed blower, as I do in my own all-electric home, select a smart thermostat with a humidity control. During summer, when your house is comfortably cool, but too humid, the blower motor slows down so the air moves slowly over the cooling coils. This increases dehumidification for better comfort and efficiency.

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Deadline: 25th of the month,
5 weeks before issue date.

Valentine Cookie Bouquet

1 cup butter, softened
1 cup sugar
¼ cup milk
1 egg
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
2¾ cups all-purpose flour
½ cup baking cocoa
¾ teaspoon baking powder
¼ teaspoon baking soda
24 long wooden skewers

Frosting:
½ cup butter, softened
2 cups confectioners' sugar
2-3 tablespoons maraschino cherry juice

In a large mixing bowl, cream butter and sugar. Beat in the milk, egg and vanilla. Combine the flour, cocoa, baking powder and baking soda; add to creamed mixture and mix well. Cover and refrigerate for 1 hour or until easy to handle.

On a lightly floured surface, roll out half of the dough to ⅛-inch thickness. Cut out with a floured 3-inch heart-shaped cookie cutter. Place 1-inch apart on ungreased baking sheets.

Place skewers on top of each cookie, with one end of each skewer about 1 inch from top of each heart. Gently press into the dough. Place a little extra dough over each skewer; press into cookie to secure. Bake at 350 degrees for 8–10 minutes or until firm. Let stand for 2 minutes before removing to wire racks to cool.

Roll out remaining dough on a lightly floured surface. Cut out with a floured 3-inch heart-shaped cookie cutter. Cut out centers with a 1-inch heart-shaped cutter. Bake at 350 degrees for 8–10 minutes or until firm. Let stand for 2 minutes before removing to wire racks to cool.

In a mixing bowl, combine butter, confectioners' sugar and enough cherry juice to achieve spreading consistency. Gently spread frosting over cookies with skewers; top with cookies with cutout centers.

Yield: 2 dozen.

Heart's Delight Éclair

1 package (17¼ ounces) frozen puff pastry, thawed
3 cups cold milk
1 package (5.1 ounces) instant vanilla pudding mix
2 cups whipping cream
1 teaspoon vanilla extract, divided
1 cup confectioners' sugar
1 tablespoon water
¼ teaspoon almond extract
½ cup semisweet chocolate chips
1 teaspoon shortening

On a lightly floured surface, roll each puff pastry sheet into a 12-inch square. Using an 11-inch heart pattern, cut each pastry into a heart shape. Place on greased baking sheets. Bake at 400 degrees for 12–15 minutes or until golden brown. Remove to wire racks to cool.

Meanwhile, combine milk and pudding mix until thickened. In a mixing bowl, beat cream and ½ teaspoon of vanilla until stiff peaks form. Carefully fold into pudding. Split puff pastry hearts in half. Place one layer on a serving plate. Top with a third of the pudding mixture. Repeat twice. Top with remaining pastry.

In a bowl, combine confectioners' sugar, water, almond extract and the remaining vanilla until smooth. Spread over top.

Melt chocolate chips and shortening; pipe in diagonal lines in one direction over frosting. Beginning 1 inch from side of heart, use a sharp knife to draw right angles across the piped lines. Refrigerate until set.

Yield: 10–12 servings.

Lemon Tea Cookies

¾ cup butter, softened
½ cup sugar
1 egg yolk
½ teaspoon vanilla extract
2 cups all-purpose flour
¼ cup finely chopped walnuts

Filling:
3 tablespoons butter, softened
4½ teaspoons lemon juice
¾ teaspoon grated orange peel
1½ cups confectioners' sugar
2 drops yellow food coloring, optional

In a mixing bowl, cream butter and sugar. Beat in the egg yolk and vanilla. Gradually add flour. Shape into two 14-inch rolls; reshape each roll into a 14-by-1⅛-by-1⅛-inch block. Wrap each in plastic wrap. Refrigerate overnight.

Unwrap and cut into ¼-inch slices. Place 2 inches apart on ungreased baking sheets. Sprinkle half of the cookies with nuts, gently pressing into dough. Bake at 400 degrees for 8–10 minutes or until golden brown around the edges. Remove to wire racks to cool.

In a small mixing bowl, cream butter, lemon juice and orange peel. Gradually add confectioners' sugar. Tint yellow if desired. Spread about 1 teaspoon on bottom of the plain cookies; place nut-topped cookies over filling.

Yield: about 4½ dozen.

Recipes are by Taste of Home magazine. For a sample copy, send $2 to Taste of Home, Suite 4321, P.O. Box 990, Greenda WI 53129-0990. Visit the Web page at www.tasteofhome.com.

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Astonishing Discovery of Mysterious "Gold Rush" Coin Stuns Experts

World's Rarest U.S. $20 Gold Proof Found: The San Francisco Mint 1854 Double Eagle Proof!

WASHINGTON, D.C—A one-of-a-kind U.S. Treasury gold proof coin has been suprisingly discovered within the vaults of the Smithsonian Institution. This 1854-S gold Double Eagle $20 coin was struck by the San Francisco Mint in its first year of operation. The San Francisco Mint was born out of the need for a Western Frontier Mint when, in January of 1848, gold flakes were discovered at Sutter's Mill triggering one of the most important chapters in U.S. History—The California Gold Rush! To the surprise of historians, this single "S" mint Proof coin was individually struck from specially polished minting dies. How this unique Proof Double Eagle made its way across the continent and then into the hands of the Smithsonian Institution is still a mystery.

Today the First Federal Mint announces the public release of the first ever Proof commemorative layered in 24k gold honoring this rarest U.S. Government $20 gold piece. This Proof has a frosted image against a deep mirror field, creating a breathtaking work of art in gold. This 150th anniversary Mint release honors the legacy of a true historic masterpiece.

The magnificent proof is layered in 24k gold and measures a full 39mm in diameter to truly showcase the beauty and intricacy of this legendary coin design. The Double Eagle Proof is available only through this limited edition, private release from the First Federal Mint at the advance issue price of $19.95 each.

Fabulous Rarity Valued at $12 Million.

Only one original proof coin is known to have been struck. Even the foremost rare coin experts were unaware of its existence until it was unexpectedly found deep in the vaults of the Smithsonian museum. America's foremost authority on U.S. gold coins, David Akers, has written, "the 1854-S Double Eagle is easily the most significant and desirable branch mint proof coin in existence". With the recent auction sale of one of the three 1933 St. Gaudens Double Eagles for $7.9 million, senior numismatist Nicholas Bruyer estimates the unique 1854-S Proof Double Eagle would bring at least $12 million if it ever becomes available at auction.

Not shown actual size

The "Gold Rush" Coin.

2004 marks the 150th anniversary of this historic mint striking. The First Federal Mint is releasing this collectors quality Gem Proof layered in 24k gold to honor the legend, lore and legacy of the 1854-S Double Eagle!

Special Discount for Advance Orders.

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Your 1854-S Double Eagle 150th Anniversary layered Gold Proof will be protected in a clear acrylic holder and mounted in a deluxe presentation case. A signed and numbered Certificate of Authenticity will attest to the specifications and Limited Edition status of this exclusive private mintage.

Your order must be placed during this advance issue period to qualify for the $19.95 price. Multiple orders of five or more will be priced at $17.95 per Proof. You must be 100% satisfied with your order, or simply return it within 30 days by insured mail for a prompt refund of the purchase price.

Price Guarantee!

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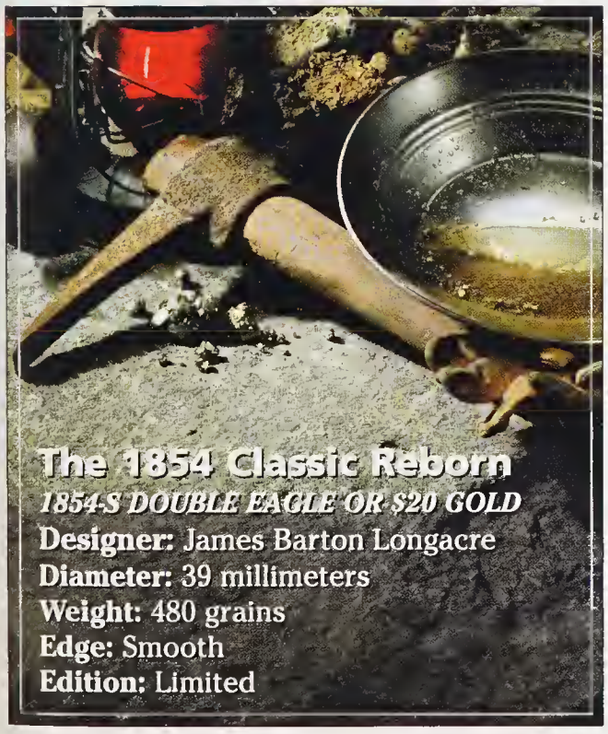

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